

## DISCOURSE

Concerning

GOD's Foreknowledge,

AND

*Man's Free Agency :*

WHEREIN

Their seeming Opposition is reconciled, and real Consistency Demonstrated from the Holy Scriptures, and Arguments thence deduced.

ACTS 4. 28. *For so do whatsoever thy hand and thy Counsel determined before to be done.*

Phil. 2. 12, 13. — *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Deut. 30. 19. *I have set before you Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing ; therefore choose Life, &c.*

L O N D O N,

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## The PREFACE.

**I**N the Perusal of this small Tract, the Reader finds but small Satisfaction, I hope he will not much wonder at it, when he remembers, that Larger Volumes, and even Learned Ones too, in Matters especially of this Nature, do not always answer Expectation. I pretend to no great share of Learning, nor any large measure of Acute Judgment; only I am naturally dispos'd to Thinking and Consideration, and upon the Occasion mentioned at the Entrance of the Ensuing Discourse, which is no fictitious Pretence, but a thing that did really happen about two years agoe, I took a Fancy to set down my thoughts upon this abstruse Subject. Some few that have seen it in Manuscript, have thought it to be tollerable Sense, and might perhaps be a further Occasion to some Man of better Parts to speak more clearly to the Point, for which cause I am not unwilling to permit it's Publication; for I believe the Subject has not been hitherto exhausted; and I desire nothing more than to be out-done, or even confuted, by any one that can make things more coherent,

## The Preface.

and better vindicate the Divine Attributes.

In the mean time, \* I have met with a Curious Discourse concerning things above Reason, amongst which the Subject here treated of, is mention'd as one; by which I perceive, that this Essay of mine is not impertinent, tho' perhaps it may be ineffectual, and come far short of the Design. For how can an Unlearned Head (by never so much thinking) think to bring that under Reason, which so great a Wit hath ranked among things above it? So that the importance of the Attempt will not (I fear) account for the ill management of it: Yet its Innocency will (I hope) defend it from any heavy Censure. If I have not wholly subdu'd my Province unto Reason, yet I have given it a kind of Negative Voice; that is, tho' Reason cannot absolutely command the Affirmative, it shall nevertheless so far rule the Opposer, as to prevent his Negative. Some things must be granted, tho' perhaps not without difficulty, because they cannot be deny'd without far greater Inconvenience.

If it be said, We cannot understand how any thing can be certain, and yet contingent; or how a voluntary Action can be foreseen, which depends upon Free-choice, and that at

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\* By a Fellow of the R. S.



## The Preface.

any time until it be effected, may be either done or let alone. Let such Persons try how they can clear the Inconveniencies of an Ignorant and Imperfect Deity, which will lye hard upon them if they grant not Divine Prescience. On the other side, let them see with what success they can take away distributive Justice, and root out the Notion and Existence of Good and Evil; which task is of Necessity incumbent on them that deny Man to be a Free Agent. If things to come be not foreseen, what will become of Divine Providence? If there be not in Man a free Election, where is sin? for where there is no choice, how can any one choose amiss? To chastise my Child for Disobedience, would be all one as to whip my Clock for going amiss. Either God Almighty foresees things future, or he cannot be God: Either Man is a voluntary Agent, or he cannot be Man. If these things therefore will not stand together, Reason it self may seem impertinent, and it's natural Conclusions altogether useless: For, to what purpose is Discourse or Ratiocination, when either there can be no Transgression, or none to take Notice of it, and punish it?

These are the inconveniencies which men run the hazard of in this matter: For rather

## The Preface.

than admit one apparent difficulty, which consists perhaps only in the narrowness of humane understanding, they choose to fill the World with Contradiction and Absurdity. Some will venture to mix Heaven and Earth together, under a State of War and Rapine, without any sense of Divine Authority to Awe rebellious Mankind; and others will attempt to turn God out of the World, because they cannot comprehend his Perfections and Operations. But surely it is not advisable to Cashier every thing that puts a stress upon our limited Faculties, nor run down all those things for false, which consist not well with what we apprehend to be true. To which purpose the Discourse above mentioned contains a parcel of the Noblest Instances, apply'd and manag'd with the greatest Clearness, and to the highest Ends and Advantage, of any Book I have hitherto met with. From thence I gladly learn, that there are certain Priviledg'd Things, which will by no means stoop to Common Reason, nor accommodate themselves to those Rules and Measures which are sufficient for other Matters. Not but that there is a peculiar sort of Reason in these also; for tho' they are above my Reason to apprehend them fully, yet I apprehend very good Reason why they should be so. For, either my Capacity

## The Preface.

is bounded, or it is not; if it be, 'tis sure to be over-power'd in grasping an unlimited thing; if not, it must then be infinite: And since I know many Capacities about the same Level with mine own, and not a few incomparably greater, it must follow, that, not only a multitude of infinites are consistent, but a Number also of Capacities, each of which is more than infinite; which Conclusion I think is more than sufficiently absurd. Besides, since God cannot do what is inconsistent, or involves a Contradiction, he could not create a Power or Faculty, comprehensive of his own Perfections; for that could be no less than infinite. he cannot parcel out his peculiar Attributes unto his Creatures; for that would imply a contradiction. Wherefore the most shallow Reason may conclude, there must of necessity be those things, which the most refined Wisdom cannot adequately comprehend.

And this is so, not only in reference to the Divine Perfections, but in things also of a lower Nature, of which it may not be improper to insert one instance in this place, whereby an undeniable Truth will appear to be attended with unaccountable difficulty. For the Ensuing Discourse pretends not to answer all the Cavils that may be made against a Meridian Truth, (which yet like the Sun it  
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## The Preface.

self) hath some Obscurities; much less doth it undertake to make men see, who are either blind or shut their Eyes.. But the design of it is, to assert from the Scriptures, the Truth of Divine Prescience, and of voluntary Election; to evince the necessity of admitting them both; to accommodate the seeming Opposition, and to point out some of those unconcluding Arguments, that mislead Men to apprehend an inconsistency where there is none. But in case I have not performed this with sufficient Strength and Clearness of Expression, it will not be forreign to the matter in hand, to shew by an instance, that somethings may not only be true, but are almost universally acknowledged, which yet how they can be so, is insuperably hard to be conceived.

And this shall be an instance which doth frequently occur to every one that is conversant about Decimal Numbers: Scarce any good Accountant but understands, no learned man but will acknowledge the force of it. For you may have a small fraction, suppose of a farthing, or of a barley corn, not worth demanding, which yet cannot be deny'd to be infinitely Divisible; insomuch, that going about to find some determinate part of such a fraction, as  $\frac{1}{10}$ ,  $\frac{1}{100}$ , or the like, you may indeed divide it according to Decimal Arithmetick, and you shall presently

## The Preface.

presently come near the truth, and the further you continue your Division; you shall still come the nearer: But though you Divide it everlastingly, you shall never be able to get out entirely the part you aim at, but the Quotient will still be defective, and something will for ever remain of the Dividend.

To make out this the more evidently, I put the following Case for an Example: Seven Workmen are to receive for some piece of Work 20 s. to be equally divided amongst them; and supposing my self to be one of the seven, I demand my share; but first I am to compute what it comes to. To do this, I make use of Decimals, which in many Questions are very expeditious, and much in use at this day. It is no more but only to divide 20 by 7: But since there is a remainder, I add Cyphers to the Dividend, and so continuing the Division to four places. I find in the Quotient this mixt Number, 2. 8. 5. 7. which comes to 2 s. 10 d. 1 q. and something more, which is a solution exact enough for common practice.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 20 \text{ } 2.8.5.7 \\
 14 \text{ } \overline{) \phantom{0000}} \\
 60 \phantom{0000} \\
 56 \phantom{0000} \\
 \hline
 54 \phantom{0000} \\
 35 \phantom{0000} \\
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 50 \phantom{0000} \\
 49 \phantom{0000} \\
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 \end{array}$$

But this is not all; for there remains one of the Dividend, that is to say, one thousandth part of a Shilling, and of this I demand  $\frac{1}{7}$ , to make up my full proportion of the 20 s. I there

## The Preface.

there still proceed to Divide, in order to get out my seventh part exactly, but I shall never be able to do it; no, though the Division were to be continued from Age to Age for one thousand years, and after that for another, yet still the Quotient would be too little, and the Dividend inexhaustible.

In this plain and familiar Question, resolv'd by Decimals, three things are evident.

1. That in a few minutes time an answer may be given, tho' not exact, yet sufficiently true for common use; that is to say, in half an hour at most, I may safely aver it, that so much is my full share, within less than one Millioneth part of a farthing; and yet at the same time, I may be sworn, that the same is not my proportion exactly.

2. Let me continue the Division as far, and as long as I please, I shall come nearer still and nearer to the truth, and every new figure in the Quotient, adds something to my share, which I had not before; it lessens the Dividend and approaches by various (or rather infinite) degrees nearer to  $\frac{1}{7}$ , which is the proportion aimed at. But

3. It can never be accomplisht; Myriads of Ages would not suffice to drain this Fountain. You may suppose (if you please) the Quotient to be extended in Decimal Fractions, as far as  
from

## The Preface.

from the Arctick to the Antartick Pole ; all that would not reach a true seventh part, tho' every figure ( as I said ) advances something towards it.

Let us now lay all this together, here is a Mark to be hit, as suppose it were a Jack lying in a Bowling-Alley, you may aim at it, and presently come within an hair's breadth, your Bowl may be still in motion, and every moment come nearer to the Mark, and yet shall never touch it.

This Example in Arithmetick seems to conclude no less than those two other Noted Curiosities in Geometry, concerning the Hyperbole and Diagonal, and has a respective Affinity to them both. For whereas the Hyperbole, may have such a Relation to a right line drawn near it, that both being prolonged, it shall come nearer and nearer to the said right Line ; yet how far soever both lines be extended, they shall never meet ; this is very nearly resembled in the case before us. And whereas it is impossible to assign any common Measure for the Side and Diagonal of a Square, which shall exactly measure them both, but there will remain a part of the one line, less than the said common measure, after you have made that as little as you please : So here, it is impossible to exhaust Decimal Numbers by sevens, because

## The Preface.

cause that 7. and 10. ( or any number consisting of 1. with the Addition of Cyphers ) are so far incommensurable, that nothing above an Unit can be a common Measure to them both. To conclude, from this plain and familiar instance, may be inferred the endless Divisibility of matter, that the Parts of any thing exceed the whole, and that the whole Globe of Earth is no further divisible, nor cannot be said to contain a greater Number of Parts, than one small grain of Sand.

Now if there be such a mysterious depth in Lines and Numbers, such a boundless Abyss in any small particle of Earth or Clay, that the Wit of Man cannot comprehend it, what shall we say of him that made all things in Number, Weight and Measure? How can we excuse the audacious folly of pretending to measure Eternity by the unequal standard of our Judgment, or Circumscribe infinity within the narrow Circle of Humane Capacity? Wherefore if the Reader shall dislike the following Discourse, and the Reasons therein made use of, let him for his own satisfaction ( and for mine too, if he please ) bethink himself of better, and therein he may do a piece of service, both useful and acceptable. But for any one to confine the ineffable perfections of the Supreme Being to his own faculties, is a piece of egregious vanity, and an undertaking altogether desperate. A



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DISCOURSE

Concerning  
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**I** Happened a while ago, to be present at a Discourse between two Gentlemen, concerning the fatal Period of Man's Life, or the fixed certainty of Future Events : The one affirming it, from the consideration of God's Foreknowledge; the other denying it, from the evident certainty of Man's Free-will. The former urged; what God Foresees, cannot but come to pass; the latter pleaded, Man cannot choose, nor refuse, the doing of that, which is certain to be done. I thought there was truth in what they both grounded their Arguments upon, but certain inferences, pretended to be drawn from thence, which this Discourse produced

duced, I could by no means approve of, I did therefore interpose a little for an accommodation, but with so ill success, that I have a mind to try, if I can do any better in this Paper. Not that I will presume to moderate betwixt two Persons, each of them better Learned, and of far greater Abilities than my self. But since their Discourse hath so fix'd the Subject in my mind, that I cannot easily remove it, I will only attempt to clear the Notion a little to my own Apprehension, by setting my thoughts in some kind of order in reference to this matter. I shall therefore endeavour these three things.

1. To assert from Scripture, that God foresees future Events; and that nevertheless, Man is a free and voluntary Agent.

2. To shew, how these two things agree together; and detect the fallacy of those Reasonings that represent them inconsistent.

3. To answer some of those Objections, that are wont to occur in this Debate.

I begin with the first, and easiest part of my Task, namely, to assert God's Foreknowledge, and Man's Free-will, out of the Scriptures. These are indeed two several subjects, and might challenge each of them

them a distinct Head of Discourse: yet I rather chose to manage them both in one, by linking Scriptures together in such sort, that of each couple, the one shall make out Divine Prescience, and the other Humane Freedom; and being consider'd together, shall evince, that both these have oft-times been conversant about the same particular event; that is, one Text shall prove God's Fore-knowledge of, and another shall evidence Mans Freedom in, doing or refusing the same individual Action.

But first, that I may clear my way as much as I can, I must explain the Terms, or give some account, at least, how I understand them. Some indeed except against the word Prescience, and tell us, that God doth not properly fore-see any thing, since he beholdeth all things as present; but this I count is Criticism without Necessity; for the word is frequently used, as 'tis taken in this Discourse, and is proper enough with respect unto us, and to such things as are not yet in being. What shall be a thousand years hence, is indeed potentially in God, but not yet actually existent: So that his knowledge of such things, is not unfitly called Prescience, as  
also

also the respect and consideration of something that is distant, is called Providence. Now as God's Omnipotence did virtually comprehend from Eternity, all the Creatures that were to be produced in Time ; So his Omniscience gives him an entire View and Prospect of all their Actions. They cannot act but by a Power derived from him ; how then should they do any thing unknown to him ? He knows what himself will bring to pass in spite of all opposition ; and he knows what Latitude he will allow his Creatures in their Actions. Since therefore God Almighty knows his own Will, and since Nothing can ever come to pass without his Will, either positive or permissive ; it must follow, that he sees and knows all things and events, which are to come, and not yet actually existent, with equal certainty as if they were present. And this is what I mean by Divine Prescience.

I must now fix my Notion of Free-will, and herein I shall carefully avoid all School Controversies about it, or about Common and Efficacious Grace : As also those Dominican Fancies about a thing they call  
 \* *Next Power*, which is next to none,  
 and

and Sufficient Grace, which some think altogether insufficient. These and such like questions I leave to be beaten into Atoms between the Jesuites and Jansenists.

And whereas some contend, that it is in every Man's power to do what the Gospel enjoyns: For should God require of any man what is impossible to be done by him, he must needs appear to be a hard Master.

Others deny that any man can, or ever will effectually believe and repent without special Grace, which wherever it comes, makes a thorow work of Conversion in the heart, and therefore can never be lost, nor the person in whom it is finally miscarry.

Others again say, there is a sufficiency of Grace, which with pious endeavours will bring a Man to happiness, yet under a possibility of Apostatizing, in which case God may and doth sometimes relinquish the Person to final Destruction.

And others, to name no more, say, there is a Common Grace, or Universal Talent given to all Men, which tho' of itself, it is by no means sufficient, yet upon a conscientious improvement thereof, with earnest Prayer for further daily Supplies, it will please God to bestow such a  
B. Measure,

Measure, as shall be sufficient to Salvation; whilst those who were intrusted with the same stock, having laid it up in a Napkin, are through their own Default, utterly ruin'd. Yet they add withal, that there are a certain Number, more peculiarly called *the Elect*, whom Efficacious Grace does seize upon, some in a high Career of Wickedness, others at first even against their Will, tho' in the day of Gods Almighty Power, they become a willing People, to that degree, that they desire nothing more than to lay out their lives, to spend and be spent (as St. Paul said) for the advancement of that Grace and Truth whereby they are subdu'd and purified: But these (they say) are not the Rule and Measure of God's dealing with Mankind in general, but are to be look't upon, as certain high and noble Instances of the Freeness and Efficacy of Divine Grace, and of God's exercising an Almighty Prerogative in choosing a Raging Persecutor, or some Atheistical Debauchee, to be made a peculiar Favorite and chosen Vessel to himself.

Whereas (I say) there are these (and perhaps some other) Opinions, that are wont to fall under consideration, when the busi-

business of Free-will is in debate; I shall not trouble my self to determine which is best, nor is it material to my design: 'Tis not impossible, but with a due Respect unto Persons, Times and Circumstances, there may be something of Truth in them all, and each of them perhaps may be good or bad, according as 'tis manag'd. Truth and Error I look upon as Gold and Dross: The one is a pure and splendid thing, but may be adulterated or abused, and seldom is without alloy; the other, tho' base and ignoble, contains for the most part something of true mettall, if duly separated from the rest.

This only (under submission) I shall adventure to say as my own present thoughts about this matter, and so proceed; namely, that most men, however under a state of Nature, may do much moral good, which shall not pass unrewarded, and something too (for ought they can know to the contrary) towards acceptance with God. That many men through the Divine Goodness shall be saved, that neither know punctually the time of their Conversion, nor certainly whether they be converted or not. That few there are who attain to that compleat assurance, as to banish all

all times, all manner of Dubitation. That it is all mens duty to seek that they may find, and to wait upon God in the use of those means appointed by him in his word; and we have his promise for success. And, that no man can truly say now, or shall be able to plead at the last day, that he hath used his utmost endeavours, and found them unsuccessful. These and the like considerations may be ground enough for men to be doing good at present, and for their Relyance upon the Goodness of God for the future. But on the other hand, since there is a spiritual as well as a fleshly Wickedness, and Satan is transform'd sometimes into an Angel of Light, and lest Man should be lifted up with an apprehension of certain fine things that he can do; let him remember, that 'tis God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure; that of himself he can do nothing, and that all his righteousness is but filthy raggs. And this will help to poise him at the Center between the two Extreames of fainting and presuming, and will discover a necessity of an humble attendance at the Throne of Grace, that God would supply unto him those Divine Aids, and Spiritual Powers, by which he  
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may be enabled to encounter opposition, and find acceptance in Christ Jesus.

And herein perhaps may consist the narrowness of the way that leads to life. For one man, supposing he can do nothing acceptable to God, resolves to take his ease, until the Spirit, that Wind which bloweth where it list, breath upon him; another thinks he is able and willing, to do all that God requires; he admires his own good husbandry in the improvement of his Talent, and thanks God, he is not like other men. Now the way lying in the middle betwixt these Extremities, the least step towards a Carnal Liberty one the one hand, or a Pharisaical Righteousness on the other, must needs be a deviation from the right path, as this collateral Discourse is a digression from what I intend. But I now return, and do say, that let men establish what Doctrine they please concerning Grace, it will not import the matter in hand, since I shall confine my Notion of Free-Will to those things that are on all hands acknowledged to be within Man's power, supposing only the ordinary concurrence of God's providence thereunto.

I consider then, that Man above other Creatures hath knowledge to judge and distin-

distinguish of things commodious or inconvenient, beneficial or noxious to him, in the concerns of his Life; and it would be a strange Solæcism in Nature, if he had not the Liberty of choosing the one, and refusing the other. What doth it advantage a Man, to know the difference between a Sheep and a Wolf, if he want the Power or the Will, to make a benefit of the one, and avoid the mischief of the other? Nay I do not see, but this might render Man of all Creatures most miserable, since his knowledge of Good could be no other to him than Gall and Bitterness; whilst he finds himself fatally carried on to Evil. And suppose he had been always predetermined to Good, his knowledge of Evil then had been in vain, or rather indeed it had been impossible; since Man could not have come to the knowledge of Evil, but by doing it. And what could Man under a necessity of always doing good, signifie, more than a good Watch? which tho' it moves regularly, yet is it altogether involuntary, cannot do otherwise, knows not that it moves at all; and consequently is incapable of Praise or Encouragement, Reward or Punishment. Thus if we take away from Man his Faculties of Judging and  
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Choosing, we make the Lord of the Creation the most contemptible thing in Nature, and put him under the Feet of those Brutes he was made to rule over. So that without voluntary Agency, that is, without a Will and the proper Exercise thereof, Man becomes little better than a Senseless Machine.

But now on the contrary, we see plainly, that, by the good Providence and Disposal of Almighty God, men have power to do many things, as namely, to cultivate the Earth, to build Houses, to provide against Hunger and Cold, to educate their Children, to exercise several Arts and Trades, for the Benefit of Humane Life, and to manage all these according to certain Rules, Methods and Observations, arising partly from Experience, and partly from Mens consulting one another. I say, in all these, and a thousand more particulars, Men do consider and deliberate, and then pursue their several Designs, some with greater, others with a lesser share of Prudence, but each Employing his Measure, and accordingly determining to choose this, and refuse the other.

In short, I conceive, that God having indued Man with an Understanding to judge,

judge, and a Will to choose, and continually supplying him with power to act according to his Nature, he doth not ordinarily over-power, or impel his Faculties, but leaves him to the free Use and Exercise thereof in things within his proper Sphere. And this is what I mean by Free-will. Now I address to my Province, which is to assert this, together with God's Fore-knowledge of future Events from the Scriptures.

The first pair of Scriptures that I imploy for this Service, shall be out of *Exodus*, \* where *Moses* is appointed of God to go unto *Pharaoh*, and say unto him, *Let us go, we beseech thee, into the Wilderness, &c.* It is not easily to be imagined, but that *Pharaoh* had power to have granted this Request at first, and the very Request it self doth strongly imply a Liberty of granting it. No good Master will require any thing of his meanest Servant, with intention to punish him severely for not doing it, and yet secretly contrive means to prevent and disable him, that he cannot do it. To say, that God should send *Moses* to make a request unto *Pharaoh*, saying, *Let us go, we pray thee, that he should*  
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\* Chap. 3. 18. Chap. 3. 19.

destroy him at last for refusing, and in the mean time should bind up his heart by some irresistible influence, from all possibility of granting it: This would not only excuse *Pharaoh* from the guilt of sin, but make an odious representation of the Ever blessed God; as if his Wildom were exercis'd in laying snares for the innocent, and his power in their destruction. Should a Writing-Master guide his Scholars hand, to make a blot, or some ill Character, and then beat him for it, whereas being left to himself he would have done better, what could be thought of such behaviour in a Master? and how just would be the Scholar's indignation against him?

The sinfulness of an Action consists in this, that it is voluntary, and against the Command; the nature of a voluntary action is, that 'tis done out of choice and deliberation, when otherwise it might be forborn. Now, either *Pharaoh* sinn'd in detaining the People, or he did not; if not, wherefore was he destroy'd? \* *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* If he did, he acted out of Choice, and consequently he might have dismissed the *Israelites* sooner, if he had pleased. Hence it will also follow, that there

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\* Gen. 18. 2

could be no secret Influence, nor any pre-determining Concourse from God, to bind his Faculties, or take away his Free-agency; only the Pride of his Heart, despising God's Message to him, and his domineering Ambition to keep the People in Slavery, did out-weigh (in his unjust Ballance) the other Motives he had to dispense with them.

And herein consisteth the nature of Election, that of two things proposed, with Motives on either part, a man freely chooseth that which likes him best, in his present Apprehension, tho' at the same time (if he thought good) he might choole the other. Thus did *Pharaoh* choole to detain the People, there's his Choice; yet before ever the matter was propounded to him, God himself says, \* *I am sure he will not let you go*; here is *Fore-knowledge*: Therefore Divine Prescience and Humane Liberty are consistent, and have been conversant about the same individual Action.

But here an Objection may arise from the seventh Chapter, and the third verse, where God says, † *He will harden Pharaoh's heart*: From whence it might be supposed, that *Pharaoh* could not act voluntarily, nor be said to have any real Freedom of Will. To this I answer,

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\* Exod. 3. 19. † Exod. 7. 3.

1. I will not deny, but that in consideration of *Pharaoh's* former Wickedness, in dealing so barbarously with the People of *Israel*, God might forsake him, and give him over to hardness of Heart. But then,

2. I deny that this hardness of heart, by whomsoever, or in what manner so ever it was wrought, could deprive him of the Liberty of doing a Civil Act within his power. He might for some self End, or with some ill design, have dismissed the *Israelites*, and yet still have retained his hard heart; it was but a word speaking, and the business had been done. And it is observable, that while the smart was upon him, he could say, \* *I and my People are wicked*; and promised too, to let the *Israelites* go; but still, as he found respite, (thinking perhaps the storm was over) he retracted. On the one hand, there was the danger of perishing, or having at least) his Kingdom ruin'd by those Judgments God sent upon him: On the other hand, there was the lust of tyrannizing over an enslaved People, and the benefit of their Labours in making Brick. These two weights being opposed each to other in the Scales, sometimes the one, and then presently the other preponderates. And

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\* Exod. 9. 27, 28.

this purely is deliberation, the result whereof is choosing, and choosing is the undoubted property of a free Agent.

3. Concerning the hardening of *Pharaoh's* heart, the Apprehensions of Learned Men are different; that which to me appears the most reasonable is to this effect, namely, that this induration is not to be understood as any positive Act, or immediate Efficiency from God, whereby *Pharaoh's* heart was made hard, ( much less his Will Predetermin'd ) directly and properly, no more than it is to be understood that our Saviours coming was directly and properly to fill the World with Dissentions, because he himself saith expressly, that \* *He came not to bring peace on the Earth, but rather division.* The primary intention of the Gospel, no doubt, was *Peace and Good Will towards men*; but meeting with various tempers, and sundry degrees of Corruption in the hearts of men, it could not choose but occasion dissention and a sword upon the Earth. In like manner the primary intention of God's Judgments, is to reform the World, and bring men to Repentance, whilst in some Persons they have a quite contrary effect. So that, as the Gospel of  
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\* Luke 12. 51, 52.



Peace was the accidental cause of War, so might God's dealing with *Pharaoh* tend to harden his Heart, and yet to soften a less rebellious one, as the same Sun beam melteth Wax and hardeneth Clay. And *as sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful, \* in so much that the Commandment it self, which was ordained unto life, is found to be unto death* : So *Pharaoh's* stubbornness, under the Divine Hand, becomes the more exceeding stubborn ; and that Chastisement, which was ordained unto Reformation, did the more effectually promote his destruction. Hence it is highly probable, that, *I will harden his heart*, may import no more than this, I will bring such things to pass, and in such a manner, as shall through his own Corruptions, render him much more obdurate.

That the natural and direct tendency of God's dealing with *Pharaoh* was to convince him, seems very apparent from these Considerations : 1. He orders *Moses* to try him with Innocent Miracles, afterwards with smarting ones, by such degrees, till it come at last to the death of his First-born. 2. While the Plagues lay heavy upon him, he gave some signs of a yielding and relenting

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\* Rom. 7. 11, 13.

lenting temper, but ever in the Intervals he contracted a greater obdurateness. 3. The Judgments of God had their proper Effect upon the *Egyptians*, so far, that they would gladly have the *Israelites* dismissed sooner, and at last, were not only urgent to have them gone in haste, but willing to part with their \* Jewels into the bargain. These considerations ( I say ) seem very much to favour the forementioned sense of the Place, but whether that be the only true meaning of it, I shall not contend, so long as I can make it good, that *Pharaoh* was a Free Agent in that particular thing which was foretold by God Almighty.

The next double Testimony shall be out of † *Ezekiel*, where the Prophet is sent to the *Israelites*, and words put into his Mouth, to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways, lest they should dye. Hence I argue thus ; either the House of *Israel* might have obeyed God's message to them by the Prophet, or else not : If not, how shall we clear the sincerity of God's dealings with them ? Or will his message to them appear any more than a Complement ? Let us have a Care of intrenching upon Blasphemy. But, if they might have humbled themselves at the

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\* *Exod.* 12. 33, 35. † *Ezek.* 3. 4.

the Prophet's voice, as *Nineveh* did in the like case, it will follow, that they were not by any previous necessity divested of their *Liberum Arbitrium*, as is also evident from these words so often repeated in the Prophet's Commission, *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear?* which is as much as to say, they have their free choice. And what follows? \* *But the House of Israel will not hearken unto thee.* God doth not only afford Liberty and Opportunity of Repentance, but he urges the same by strong pleadings and inducements; and yet at the same time, he foresees a contrary Event. And this is what I undertook to assert from the Scriptures.

Again, in the 5th. of *Hosea*, † God foretells, that *Israel* and *Ephraim* shall fall in their iniquity, *Judah* also shall fall with them; yet in the 6th. Chapter ‖ he exhorts to Repentance. This indeed might have its proper effect too, upon some small remnant that should escape (a) and remember God among the Nations whither they were to be carried captives. But now there is the same means afforded to those that should fall in their Iniquity, as to the few that should escape; nor doth God's Fore-know-  

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\* Ezk. 3. 7. † Hos. 5. 5. ‖ Hos. 6. 1. (a) Ezek. 6. 8, 9.

ledge of the several Events impose a necessity upon either. He grants Liberty unto both, which he knows a Remnant will make good use of, whilst the greater Number will abuse it to their ruin. Thus it is evident, that Liberty and Prescience are consistent.

It is moreover prophesied, that by \* reason of Idolatry, they shall be as Chaff driven with a whirlwind out of the Floor, and as smoke out of the Chimney; yet afterwards, we read in the same Chapter, *O Israel thou hast destroyed thy self*. We do not use to say, a man destroys himself, that is unwillingly run down by external force, or some inevitable necessity; nor can he that ruins himself charge the fault upon another. If *Israel* destroys himself, he is surely the Agent of his own destruction; and if so, he is either a Voluntary or an Involuntary Agent; if Involuntary, he cannot be said to destroy himself, no more than a House burns it self when fire is set to it by an Incendiary. An Involuntary Agent, as a Sword or a Hammer, can only act as 'tis mannag'd by Hands, and those govern'd by the Will. It remains then, that *Israel* was the voluntary Agent of his own Ruine; and since

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\* Hosea 13. 1. † Hosea 13. 9.

since this is foretold of God by the Prophet, it must follow ( if the Scriptures be true ) that Divine Prescience doth not any way infringe the Liberty, or Free-agency of rational Creatures.

God foresaw, that wicked Hands would be forward enough to deliver up the Divine Person unto Death, who was the \* Lord of Life ; nay, his determinate Counsel did concur with his Fore-knowledge, so far as to let it proceed to Execution, as the Learned Mr. *Howe* observes. And our Saviour † himself, not only describes particularly the manner and circumstances of his own Death, when yet it was not near at hand, but is said also to || *know all things* that should come upon him. Yet if the Actors of this wickedness had been rightly informed what they were about, they would have left their work for other hands. That's very strange ( says one of our Disputants ) here is an Event secur'd by the determinate counsel of God, here is the place where, the manner how, and the Persons by whom it should be brought to pass, describ'd before hand by our Saviour ; can any thing that is so infallibly certain admit of an If ? Yes, in St. *Paul's* account it may , and he is a person that deserves

\* Act. 2. 23. † Mat. 26. 17. || Jo. 18. 4.

serves some regard. And indeed, his Assertion will appear highly reasonable, when we consider the Princes of this World, so sadly misinformed as they were, and impos'd upon by all the wicked Artifice imaginable, yet we do not find them very eager to be concern'd in the Blood of that just person, when the principal Agent pretends \* to wash his hands of it, and professes † he found no cause of death in him. And had it not been for the impetuous Clamours of a wretched People, and the danger of a Tumult, 'tis probable that the malicious contrivance of the Priests, and their sham Evidence, would not have weigh'd against Pilate's Native Clemency. What must we then think had been done, in case of a right information? Why the Apostle tells us; || *Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory*. This puts it out of all doubt, that they were under no other force than the Result of their own Deliberation. On the one hand, there was the meekness of the Prisoner, the clemency of the Judge, and the disagreement of the Witnesses: On the other hand, there was the influence of the Priests, the ignorance of the Court, and cries of the Multitude; which

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\* Mat. 27. 24. † Luke 23. 22. || 1 Cor. 2. 8.

kept the business for a while in *Equilibrio*, but then the fear of a tumult superadded, cast the Scales. Nor were they under any further Necessity of crucifying our Saviour, by means of such a Divine Foresight, that he should be crucified, than they would have been under, in case it were to be supposed, that God had not so punctually foreseen, or foretold the same.

There are many other places of Scripture, that do evidently prove there is in Man a free Election. *Solomon* is commended for asking Wisdom, \* when he might have asked Riches, length of Days, or Revenge upon his Enemies; and *Ananias* † is the more condemned for falsity about the price of the Land, because that even after it was sold, it was in his own power.

|| *If a Wife make a Vow, it is left to her Husbands choice, either to establish it, or to make it void.*

(a) *Choose you this day whom you will serve.*

(b) *Go and say unto David, thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.*

These Scriptures are so clear, they need no Commentary, nor do they admit of any Ob-

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\* 1 Kings 3. 1. † Act. 4. 5. || Num. 30. 1. (a) Jos. 24. 15. (b) 2 Sam. 24. 12.

Objection. And I think there is no less Evidence for Divine Prescience, since all Prophecies and many other Places of Scripture, do either directly, or by just consequence put it beyond Dispute, with all that acknowledge the Authority of that sacred Book. I shall mention no more but this one, and therewith close up this first part of my Undertaking: It is so direct and full to the purpose, as if the Holy Ghost had design'd it to remove all Scruple and Hesitation about that matter. \* *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.*

Had I Leisure now, or Opportunity, to consult the Fathers or Schoolmen; I am inclinable to believe, I should have their general Suffrage in this matter; but truly those Gentlemen are none of my Familiars, and and I was loath to trouble them. Yet meeting by accident with two of them, which are esteemed no less than Oracles, I made bold to ask them their Opinions in the case. I confess, I was not displeased to find them so very civil, and favourable to the Notions, I had already formed, and in part written down, concerning this Subject. One of these

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\* Isa. 36. 9.



these was the Learned Suarez, who first of all disputing copiously about Man's capacity of acting freely, he brings it last to this issue :

\* *Experimur enim evidenter, situm esse in nostra potestate aliquid agere vel omittere, & ad hoc utimur ratione & discursu ac consultatione, ut in unam partem potius quam in aliam inclinemur : Est ergo Electio positiva in nostro arbitrio, alioqui fuisset nobis data superflue, hac deliberandi & consultandi vis.* For we find by evident Experience, that it is in our power either to do a thing or leave it undone, therefore we reason, argue and deliberate, in order to choose one thing rather than another, 'tis therefore in our power to make a positive choice, or else we have this Capacity given us in vain.

This comes close to that point. And then in the next place, he doth no less vigorously maintain God's Fore-knowledge of all Events and Actions, whether voluntary, or contingent, the Sum of which is thus.

† " God cannot (saith he) be ignorant  
 " of what he himself doth, or will do, be-  
 " cause he knows his own Will and his  
 " power to effect what he wills. Nor can  
 " can he be ignorant of what his Creatures  
 " do now, or what they shall do hereafter,  
 " because whatever is positively good in  
 " their

Metaph. Tom. 1. p. 338, 339. † Tom. 2. p. 92, 93.

" their Actions, is by immediate influence  
 " from himself; and what there is of pri-  
 " vation or defect, cannot be without his  
 " permission, and therefore he cannot be  
 " ignorant of mens sinful and wicked acti-  
 " ons. He goes on to shew, that unless God  
 " did fore-know from Eternity whatever  
 " was, or is to come to pass in time, he  
 " could neither be omnipotent nor immu-  
 " table. Not omnipotent, because in refe-  
 " rence to those things whereof he had no  
 " foresight, his Providence and Govern-  
 " ment of Affairs must needs be defective.  
 " Not Immutable, because something must  
 " daily occur to his knowledge which he  
 " knew not before.

*Atque hinc sequitur Deum habere hanc  
 Scientiam Creaturarum quæ sunt in tempore  
 ex æternitate sua, ut totam illam simul ha-  
 beat sine successione, quia non potest in se vari-  
 ationem admittere; item quia non posset Deus  
 habere perfectam providentiam in rebus admi-  
 nistrandis, nisi haberet omnium præscientiam.*  
 Thus far that Eminent Schoolman.

The other is the Angelical Thomas *Aqui-  
 nas*, as some are pleased to style him. He in  
 his *Sum of Theology* dispatches me in a few  
 words. For having first described Providence  
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according to which the occurrences now present are to be ordered, which doth therefore necessarily include prescience: He saith afterwards, *Providentia Dei est omnium singularium, nec tamen à rebus excludit contingentiam, nec casum, nec fortunam, nec librum arbitrium: That the Providence of God extendeth to all particulars, not excluding Contingency, Chance, Fortune, or Free-will.*

Add hereunto, that it was allowed St. Augustine as a Maxime, that God by his foreknowledge, doth not necessitate, or constrain, the coming to pass of the things foreknown by him. These Testimonies, as they are of unquestionable Authority, so are they clear, direct, and full to the purpose; and this is all I design for the first general Head.

I am now in the second place to attempt certain reasons, or considerations, whereby to accommodate the difference, or at least to lessen the opposition, that seems to be between Prescience and Free-will. The Heads to be insisted on for that purpose are these three: Namely, *The truth of the Holy Scriptures, The Harmony of the Divine Attributes, and the Non-causality of Divine Prescience.*

First then, I argue from the verity of the Scriptures; for I am not designing to confute

an Atheist, writing only to such as do acknowledge the Truth and Authority of those Sacred Letters; but chiefly (as I said before) for my own satisfaction. Some young Divines indeed I have observed, who in their first setting out to preach the *Word*, affect to preach altogether without it, and seem to Triumph in dispelling the darkness of Atheism and Irreligion, by the Glowworm-light of corrupt Nature. Others there are, that prove their Doctrines out of *Terence*, *Tully* and *Seneca*; whether it is, because they have not read the Bible, or that they prefer the Authority of Heathen Writers before it, or that they would be thought to be profoundly learned, I shall not dispute; but I find other more experienc'd Work-men, who do not trouble themselves to dig below the true foundation, but think the Rock of Ages safe enough for them to build upon. Now, as that Comical sort of Preaching, to vulgar Ears, doth rather Amuse than Edifie: So this Essay (which is not like to be regarded by the Learned) if it should happen to take the Country air, would look very thin without Scripture-Evidence. But if indeed the Scriptures do clearly speak the Substance of what is herein contained, this ought to have the force of a Reason, with all those  
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that acknowledge the Authority of that Book. Nor will it be material to object, that this Argument doth not sufficiently make out the reasonableness of what is here pleaded for: For as there are several Ranks of Priviledg'd things, which will not condescend to Common Reason, so there are several degrees of Reason also, of which the lower ought to yield to the Superiour; and it is the highest reason sure, that *God is true*, tho' every Man should be found a Lier.

I am by no means against it yet, that Atheism should be encountred upon its own principles, if at least it can be said to have any principles at all; but every Stripling is not a fit Champion for an overgrown Philistine: And I had rather have that Province entirely left to such as can manage it, than have the Truth to suffer by weak Patronage. As for those therefore, that expect better proof than from the Word of God, and those natural consequences arising thence, I shall leave them to the discipline of their own Consciences; for if they are not convinced by what Bp. *Wilkins*, Bp. *Ward*, Mr. *Boyle*, Dr. *Cudworth*, Sir *Cha. Wolfely*, and some others have already said against Atheism, I shall never hope to give them satisfaction.

But as for those two Gentlemen, betwixt

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whom the Controversie was started, upon which occasion I scribble down these hasty Notes, they are both of them ( I hope ) serious Christians, not doubting in the least the truth of the Scriptures, yet differing vastly in their apprehensions about this matter. One of them is firm in the belief of Divine Preiscience, but somewhat Hesitant as to the business of Free-will : The other is so much a Free-willer, that he seems to cashier Divine Preiscience ; “ For ( says he ) if God “ offer me any good thing, and knows in “ the mean time I will not accept of it, I am “ nothing beholding to him for his kindness. —

This manner of expression concerning God, is over-bold and sawcy ; for we may not speak of him with such a Liberty, as is allowable in other matters. Besides, let us observe the consequence, and we shall find it to be this, that either God Almighty has no knowledge at all of future Events ; or else, that all conditional Promises, throughout the whole Scripture, are no more than shadows ; the former of which consequences strikes at the Perfection of the Divine Nature, and the latter blurs the sincerity of the inspired Writings. To which it may be added, that such Doctrine is false, and  
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injurious to the Goodness of God : For his Benefits offered to Mankind are not to be valued by his Fore-knowledge of Non-acceptance, but by their own intrinsic worth, and by Man's Capacity of enjoying them if he will. And tho' God doth assuredly know, who will not accept of his kindness, yet he knows at the same time, the fault is in themselves ; nor is their refusal any further necessary from any such Divine Foresight, than otherwise it would have been. So that some Persons will indeed seem to have a great Veneration for the Scriptures, and yet own such Principles as render a great part of them insignificant : For, if God's Fore-knowledge necessitate all Events, so that nothing could have fallen out otherwise than it doth ; then all Divine Precepts and Rules of Life, all Promises and Threatnings upon certain conditions, are no more but Cheats and empty Formalities. But now, to those that sincerely acknowledge the Divine Authority and Truth of the Scriptures, (as all Christians ought to do) the Argument will lye thus :

What ever is entirely true, is also harmonious and self-consistent. But the Scriptures are true. *Ergo, &c.*

If it be urged, that the Scriptures, as proceeding from God, are indeed most perfectly and entirely true, yet passing through the hands of so many Men, in various Copies and Versions, from one Language into another, it cannot be, but something of humane infirmity must stick to them. This indeed I freely grant; and if any such thing can be made evident in the case before us, it will be very fit to be considered. In the meantime, there can hardly any two things be named that are more clearly and vigorously asserted in Scripture, than are Divine Prescience and Free-will, as well in the places above-mentioned, as in divers others. From whence it will follow, that if those places of Scripture be genuine, and no way corrupted (which we must suppose, till the contrary be made out) God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free-agency are not only true, but perfectly harmonious, and consistent each with other, altho' our limited sight and dazled Eyes cannot fully enable us to behold their Agreement.

Nor need we wonder at it, when we consider, that not only in the Scripture, but in *Euclid's Elements*, and many other Books approved in their kind, are found divers things,



things, which a great number of Readers, tho' men of good Sense, cannot easily understand or reconcile ; and some things of that difficulty, that the greatest Masters of Learning and Reason, have more than work enough to overcome ; of which, if need required, one might give particular Instances. Who will believe that the least Diameter of a Needle's Point should be Divisible into a Million ( or rather infinite ) Parts, and yet that a Circle, how large soever, can touch a right line but in \* one point only ? And since a Globular Body set upon a plain, can reach the same but in one point, and a point is defined to be that, which hath no part, would it not be a strange Paradox to say, † A Globe can touch a Plain in no part at all ? Yet all this leans upon Mathematical Demonstration.

It is easie to observe, that when any difficulty, or seeming opposition doth occur in Scripture, which common Readers cannot (and even Learned ones not very easily) reconcile ; two sorts of People, the Prophane and Superstitious, take hold of it to very ill purpose ; the one apprehends it their Interest

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\* That is, the right line being drawn as a tangent, but not through the Circle.

† Eucl. def. 1 Lib. 3. prop. 36. Lib. 10. prop. 117.

to have no Religion at all, looks upon the Scripture as a State-contrivance to keep the World in Order and Subjection, and hence they assume a lewd Liberty of turning it into *Burlesque* and *Ridicule*; the other sort, being for the most part over eagerly devoted to some Party, have a Religion made up of a few Fractions of Truth, neglecting in the mean time the Sum and Substance. These men pursue, to the best advantage of their Sect, that part of Scripture which hath the kindest Aspect upon their espoused Notions, and run it off from the main Body of Truth, to that Extream, that it becomes an Errour in Doctrine, and perhaps too a Rent in the Church. For the Body of Truth may not unfitly be resembled to the Body natural, which cannot live in pieces.

That there are unchangeable Decrees of God, I do not doubt; but if that Doctrine be so manag'd as to evacuate Men's Endeavours, this surely is an unwarrantable Extream. Justification by Faith is a great truth; but if it be imprudently carried to that height, as to exclude, or make men neglect a good Life, it will become a dangerous Errour. That Christ dy'd for all, is a glorious Truth, as it is laid down in Scripture; but if some stretch that Doctrine to the actu-

al *Salvation of all Men*, and others thereupon put the whole Business of Salvation within *Man's power*, these doubtless are vicious Extrems, opening a wide passage for Pride or Prophaneness. The one makes Religion altogether vain, and the other makes the Grace of God not worth looking after. So that whilst Men run into such violent Extremities, they seem to tear off some particular Truths from their Unity with the whole, which from thence forward turn into Corruption, whilst the main Body of Truth is deserted by them, and becomes useless.

And this is the case not only of the less considering Sectaries, but even of those who pretend highly to Philosophy, and aspire after the Reputation of Wits: One whereof (sufficiently known) hath improv'd three Syllables to that height, as to render a great part of the Scriptures ridiculous, and the noble Army of Martyrs no other than a Company of wilful and superstitious Fools, in needlessly exposing themselves to flames and tortures. \* *Go in peace*, says the Prophet to *Naaman*; which single case he advances to a general Dispensation for any Man to quit his Religion, as oft as it shall be difficult,

difficult, and dangerous for him to profess it. And this I take to be the Fountain Cause of all the Divisions that are, or have been among Christians; namely, that Men will not read the whole Scriptures, and give each part its just weight and measure, duly balancing and comparing one thing with another; but each Man according to his Complexion or Education, or perhaps some predominant Melancholy, lays hold of that part that suits him best, and makes up a Religion for himself, which is little more than the Result of his natural temper,

Here I call to mind a passage of a *Non-jurant*, which I happen'd to be present at. The Man was reputed among his Neighbours an honest plain Man, but somewhat rash, and of no deep consideration, as may appear by the Story. The Discourse fell out to be about Swearing, and the Person could not forbear to Declaim bitterly against it, because it is said, \* *Swear not at all*. One of the Company urg'd that of the *Hebrews*, where the *Author* speaking of God's confirming † his Promise made to *Abraham*, seems to intimate strongly the necessity of swearing in some cases, not vainly, nor in common discourse, but in a solemn manner,  
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\* Mat. 5. 34. † Hebr. 6. 13, 16, 17.

for the avoiding of Contention, and for confirming of some weighty matter. And the *Author* doth not only alledge it, without any manner of Reproof, as a practice amongst Men, who use to swear by the great-er, and amongst whom an Oath for confirmation is an End of Strife; but he adds further, that God himself, the more abundantly to shew the Immutability of his Counsel, doth condescend to that usage, confirming his promise by an Oath. To all which the Person suddenly replied, the *Author* was a *Lyer in that thing*: A decision somewhat surprizing, and no less than blasphemy; yet had thus much of Ingenuity in it, as to yield the force of the Argument on no easier terms to be avoided.

Thus If Men will needs imagine an Incongruity between Prescience and Free-will, and so reject the one, tho' both are equally asserted in Scripture, I cannot see how they can do it otherwise, than by the *Non-jurants* Argument. But surely Men of Reason and Sedate Temper, will rather argue thus, that since Prescience and Free-will agree in *uno tertio*, and that no less than the Word of God; they must not only be agreed betwixt themselves, but both true. And therefore if we cannot get them to sadge together in

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our Minds, the Reason must not be any mutual jarring of theirs, but want of room in our Understandings. If that Sacred Book were impartially read, and Religiously attended to, no violence put upon it, but all its parts understood, (as they ought to be) in Congruity with the main Bulk and Substance of the Doctrine therein contained, it would put an End to this and many other Debates. The *Magistrates Sword*, and the *Peoples Conscience*, the *Prince's Prerogative*, and *Subjects Liberty*; the *Divine Attributes*, and the *Essential Properties of Humane Nature*; would all enjoy their full Exercise and Latitude, without invading one another. And this leads to the next thing I am to consider, Namely,

The *Harmony of Divine Attributes*. Where there are intestine Jarrs and struggling Discord, there is no Unity, nor any thing like Perfection; but those Natural Notions we have of the Being of a God, do at the same time, and with equal Evidence, dictate to us his essential Perfection; therefore to talk of an imperfect Deity, is so great a piece of Non-sense, as cannot sufficiently be expos'd; because there is nothing in the World to which it can be reduced, more absurd than it self. Down-right *Atheism* is indeed

deed a monstrous thing, yet I think 'tis capable of a better Colour, than having once acknowledg'd an adorable Supreme Being, at the same time conclude him lame, or deficient. He that looks about him into the World, and yet says in his heart, \* *There is no God*, is properly a Fool, and that cannot make a rational Inference, and from the things that are made, cannot so much as conclude there must be a † Maker. And when both his Bible and his own Eyes may inform him, that every House is built by some Man, yet || (as if the World must build it self) so foolish is he as not to consider, that he that built all things is God. But now, he that thinks God like unto himself (a), that is, subject to Failing and Imperfections, is styled *Improbis*, (b) wicked or detestable, which seems to be the heavier charge of the two. And I have heard of some of the Ancients, *Plutarch* I think it was, speaking to this effect; *I had rather Posterity should say, there never was such a Man, than that Plutarch was an injurious and vile Person.*

Now this Foundation, which is deep laid both in Scripture and Natural Reason, namely; that God is every way perfect, is enough

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\* Psal. 14. 1. † Rom. 1. 20. || Heb. 3. 4. (a) Psal. 50. (b) 16. 21.

to build my whole Design upon: He is perfect in Power, \* *He doth what he will both in Heaven and in Earth*; perfect in Justice, † *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* perfect in Knowledge, || *Declaring the End from the Beginning.* His (a) *Will* is perfect, his (b) *Law* is perfect, his (c) *Work* is perfect, all his *Ways* are *Judgment*. If the Streams be so clear, the Fountain must needs be pure. But if any Man now will raise a Dispute amongst the Divine Perfections (like that of the Disciples) *which should be greatest*; or should give so much to one, as to leave nothing for another; he would make strange work. Just as if some Man should be said to be a very prudent and just Person in himself, yet when he comes to deal with his Neighbour, his Prudence undermines his Honesty, and so he would become a Knave, or on the contrary, should his Honesty out-go his Discretion, that would (in some degree) render him a Fool. And this tho' a blunt Comparison, seems to be the very ca'se in Debate. We must however be careful to speak with Reverence and Decorum, even in applying the most just Consequences of other

\* Chron. 20. 6. † Gen. 18. 25. || Job 36. 4. (a) Rom. 12. 2. (b) Psal. 18. 30. (c) 2 Sam. 22. 31. (d) Deut. 32. 4.



ther Mens Doctrine unto the divine Majesty.

The Attributes we are concern'd with in this matter are chiefly two ; but by consequence great many more ; God's *Wisdom*, and his *Goodness* ; the former implies Knowledge, and that includes Prescience ; the latter comprehends Justice, in which Free-will is strongly implied. In reference to the first, take but away from God his Fore-knowledge of future Events, and you may almost as well dethrone him ; for besides that, it doth clearly infer Ignorance and Imperfection, whereby his *Wisdom* and *Knowledge* will come in Question ; it carries with it a kind of Impotency, for he that knows not of an Event before it comes, may be surpris'd and defeated of his Expectation ; and how should he have power to have prevented what he knew not of before ? *Snarez* is positive in the place above-mentioned, *That had not God a Fore-knowledge of all things, he were not fit to govern the World.* And as for the latter, take away from Man his Free-agency, and you bring him under such a fatality, that he is in no sort Master of his own Actions ; and then saith the Learned Dr. Cudworth, \* *You take away the foundation of distributive Justice : For what E-*

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\* Intellectual World.

quity can there be in the Reward or Punishment of those things, wherein Man has no choice, and which could not possibly have fallen out otherwise ? So that here is no denying of either, without rejecting one or more of the Divine Attributes, and to rendering the Blessed God a lame and imperfect Being ; as if he could not be omniscient, but he must be Arbitrary ; nor just, without being ignorant.

Besides, how can God be said *to search the Heart*, \* and *† try the Reins*, or to what purpose should he do it, unless he knows the bent and tendency of Men's Minds, and what they will do before they act it ? And how can he suit his Providences to his blessed || Ends and Purposes, for the good of his People, if he knows not the Exigencies that shall befall them ? On the other hand, if there be no voluntary Agents in the World, what need any Providence at all ? General Laws might serve the turn, 'tis but putting the several Parts and Wheels of the Creation together, and set them a moving like a *Pendulum*, and they will drive on one another ; and so *Epicurus* his Doctrine comes in play, that *God regards not particular things*. What can we expect but confusion and disorder,

\* Rom. 8. 27. † Jer. 11. 20. || Rom. 8. 28.

der, whilst we invade the Divine Attributes, or labour to set them at odds one with another ?

But now, if we lay aside all Perverseness and Prepossession, the Harmony of the Divine Perfections will be a most pleasant object of our Consideration. God doth not impose a Necessity of sinning upon any Man, but he knows some Men will be ready enough to sin, out of choice. He doth not punish or reward in Men what he acteth himself, or what he causeth them to act without the Intervention of their Wills ; but if some will be vertuous, and others vitious, when they might be otherwise, God is just in punishing and rewarding, tho' not ignorant in the mean time, who will deserve well or ill at his hands. In a word, God doth know, that Man is a Free-Agent, because he made him so, and doth daily preserve him in that Capacity ; he also knows, that some Men will abuse their Freedom in spite of all Invitations and Inducements to the contrary, unless he interpose his Sovereign Power ( as sometimes I conceive he doth ) to move them irresistably unto good.

From what hath been said, the Argument will lye thus. God is perfect in all his Attributes, and harmonious in all his Actings,

and Providences, throughout the World: But the denial of Divine Prescience doth infringe his Wildom and Power, and the Denial of Free-will doth obstruct his Justice; therefore it must follow, that Man's Free-agency is not only consistent with God's Fore-knowledge of future Events, but both of them are most certainly true.

The third thing to be considered, is the *Non-causality of Divine Prescience*. At the time indeed when this Discourse happened, I was laught at by one of the Gentlemen, for using that as an Argument, which he would by no means admit for a truth. But I do not look upon laughter as a sufficient confutation, and oft-times those who carry things at highest, are furthest out of the way. I shall therefore lay down this Proposition, and run the hazard of Proving it, Namely, that

*God's foresight of what I shall hereafter choose, hath not any causality in it, to determine my choice, nor to infringe at all my liberty of choosing.* If I can make this evident, it will be very material; for the main thing that seems to byass and mislead Mens Minds in this matter, is an apprehension, that God's Fore-knowledge of any thing must needs cause the same, and that thence all other inferiour causes must be urged on by such a fatal  
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Necessity, that the Effect is put quite without the Verge of *Liberum Arbitrium*. But this I hope will appear to be a great Extravagancy from the following Considerations.

Let us then observe *first*, that all Foresight or Prescience, is nothing else but a sort of Knowledge, and Knowledge doth suppose something to be known antecedent thereunto. A Man cannot be said to know, but he must know something that was in being before he knew it; and even the Objects of Divine Fore-knowledge have a virtual Existence in God, antecedent in order of Nature thereunto; so that as to himself it is rather *Intuition* than *Prescience*, but with respect unto us, and to the not-yet actual Existence of the Objects, the word *Prescience* is proper enough, as was noted before. Knowledge then hath its dependance upon the things known, not they on it; and therefore strictly, Knowledge, considered barely as such, is an Effect and no Cause at all. As for Example, I know that the Sun warms and refreshes; but then there was a Sun in being first, whose influence I have found to have this Effect upon me. I know that the three Angles of every Triangle are equal to two right Angles, because first, I have seen a Triangle, and then I have seen the *Theorem* demon-

monstrated ; but my knowing it, is no cause why it is so. I deny not yet, that the knowledge of one thing, is frequently the cause of another thing subsequent, and emergent thereupon ; but never of that particular thing known ; for instance, my knowledge of a high water makes me decline the Foord, and go about by the Bridge, but it is not therefore the cause of the high water. I know that such a Man is crafty, for which cause I take care, that he do not over-reach me ; but my Knowledge is no cause of his craftiness. \* *I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not ; ( saith he that holdeth the seven Stars in his right hand : )* But if any Man will say, that this knowledge was the cause of that blasphemy, he will go near to be a Blasphemer himself.

*Object.* But here it will be objected, That these Instances are only of things already in being, which are not like to be caused by a knowledge subsequent thereunto ; but the Question is about the knowledge of things to come ; besides, if Prescience be but a species of Knowledge, and that all Knowledge supposeth something to be known antecedent to it, as was intimated above, it seems there may be a certain Prescience of a thing antecedent, or which is all

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\* Rev. 2, 9.

all one, Fore-know'edge of a thing past : But is not this a plain Contradiction?

This Objection will be easily answered, by considering the Nature of Prescience a little more particularly. And first, there is a kind of Fore-knowledge of certain things, that Man is capable of, as namely, *Changes of the Moon, Eclipses of both the great Luminaries, various Phases, Conjunctions and Configurations of Planets, Occultations of Fixed Stars, with divers other Phenomena* : All these by Calculation, may be foreseen for many years, and foretold even to a few Minutes. The King's Observer, (for Example) or any other Curious Astronomer, knows of these Appearances before they come, and when to watch them at the Observatory. But is there any Man so pleasant, as to say, that the Astronomers Skill is the cause of an Eclipse? or, if *Monsr. Hevelius* can tell when some of the fixed Stars will disappear, that therefore he hides them cunningly, and will not let the World see them? Now why should not humane Prescience, in its kind and degree, have a power of determining the Events foreseen, as well as Divine? and what's the reason that this foresight has not the least causality upon these Effects? I suppose it will be answered, because

cause they depend upon certain regular and constant Motions of the Celestial Bodies, which have been ever since the World began; and the like Appearances that are now, have been heretofore; and will be again, so long as the World shall continue; so that this Fore-knowledge is little more than Recollection of what is past. For as it would have been a rare thing to have foretold an Eclipse before ever there was any, so would it be an easie matter for a Man of ordinary Skill, to predict those that shall happen unto the Worlds end, provided he were furnished with an exact History of all those that have been from the Beginning.

Let us now examine whether these, or the like Reasons, may not be of force in the business of Divine Prescience; and in order thereunto, let us suppose some point of time, like that of the *Julian Period*, before the Creation, wherein the World was not yet in being. There was then in God, (1.) The Power and Vertue of educing this same World out of Non-existence into Being. (2.) A Will to do it, in such time and manner as seemed good unto himself. (3.) A perfect *Idea* or *Prospect* of this great Work in all its parts and Succession; and all this from Eternity: This Idea, or Eternal View  
of



of all Things and Actions, that have been, or ever shall be, is what we call Divine Pre-science ; it was antecedent to the actual Existence of the World, but subsequent in order of nature unto God's Eternal Purpose of creating it. Now I appeal to the Reason of Mankind, whether it is the Platform that builds the House, or whether we ought to refer the cause of the Worlds production unto this *Idea*, or rather to the Concurrence of Divine Will and Power.

If it be still urged, *That God's Fore-knowledge of Events must of necessity produce the same, since what he foreknows is sure to come to pass.* It may easily be answered, that what God foresees, is indeed certain; but such certainty doth not consist in the foresight, but in the causes foreseen; and tho' the effect will surely come to pass, yet not without its proper causes; of which causes, fore-knowledge can be none at all, unless it could be both the Cause and Effect of the same thing, which is impossible.

Obj. *But how can God's Fore-knowledge be called an Effect, which doth ever suppose an antecedent Cause? For since you grant it to have been from Eternity, if it be an Effect, it must be an Eternal One, whose antecedent Cause must therefore be fetcht from beyond Eternity.*

*Eternity. Nor have you yet sufficiently explained how far, or whether you admit there may be such a thing, as Fore-knowledge of what is already past, which was objected before.*

To this last part of the Objection I have already said, (if it be considered) what amounts to a sufficient Answer; but yet I shall endeavour to be a little plainer.

*First* then, that God did foreknow the things that are now past, as well as what are to come, is by no means to be doubted; but to say, that he does now foreknow what is already past, is Non-sense, because it implies the futurity of what is elapsed; as if I should say, God fore knows the Deluge, or the Building of *Babel*; this would be contradiction in point of time, as though the things were yet to come, which are long since past; but it's proper to say, God did foreknow them.

But *Secondly*, the Notion I aim at, will best be apprehended, by remembering always to distinguish between the *real* and the *virtual* Existence of things; the former is brought forth in time, and therefore I say, God did foresee from Eternity; but I cannot say so of the latter, which being it self Eternal, can admit no priority in point of time. As for instance, 10000 years ago the  
World

World was not extant, and something doubtless will be hereafter, which is not now ; but there never was, nor ever will be anything extant, but what is, or was, Virtually, existant in God, and clearly visible to his all-seeing Eye from all Eternity; therefore God's Omniscient View, or *Idea* of all things, being antecedent to the Creation, but subsequent in order of Nature to the Virtual Existence of the World, is Foreknowledge with respect to the one ; but Contemplation or Intuition in respect of the other. If we look forward to the Creation, it is Prescience ; but if we look back upon Eternity, it is the result of Divine Will and Power, or it is God's beholding in himself the Platform of his Design, which ( as I said before ) is an effect of the Divine Purpose, to build a world : which Purpose is the highest Link in the Chain of Causality, even as the first step of *Solomon* towards building of the Temple was this, \* *Behold, I purpose to build an House unto the Name of the Lord my God.* It is true, that God is infinite and Eternal in all his Attributes, and so there can be no Precedence amongst them in order of time, yet in order of Nature there must be Priority, since God cannot be said to behold

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a pure *Nothing*, to see, know, and behold, are Relative Terms, and do ever suppose something to be seen, known, or beheld.

*Thirdly*, As for the other part of the Objection against an Eternal Effect, it will lye as hard against our Blessed Saviour, who is the *Eternal Son of God*, the *brightness of his Fathers Glory*, the *Express Image of his Person*, and the *Effect of his Love to Mankind*. These also are relative Terms, a Son supposes a Father; an Image, or Copy, supposes an Original, yet none surely doubts the Eternity of him who *laid the foundations of the Earth, and whose Throne is for ever and ever*.

I put the Question even now, what the reason was, that the *Astronomers Skill and Fore-knowledge of the Celestial Phenomena*, had not the least influence to cause the same? and I gave this Answer, because these *Phenomena* did depend upon certain Motions of the Heavenly Bodies, which were regular, and had been from the beginning of the World; and so it was but enquiring into these Motions, and the Fore-knowledge of Eclipses, Conjunctions, and the like, would follow by consequence. Let it be now demanded, why Divine Prescience had not any causality or influence upon the Creation?

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\* Heb. i. v. 3, 8, 10.

on? and I shall answer this Question just after the same manner; namely, because the Creation did depend upon the Will and Purpose of God, which is the first Mover, the Fountain-Cause of all things, and was from Eternity. Omnipotence it self, and even infinite Goodness, would seem barren and unfruitful without a Will to Act, for whatever God made in Wisdom, and ruleth by his Power, were wrought after the \* *Counsel of his own Will*; nor is there any thing in Heaven or in Earth, that can prescribe (in point of causality) unto the Blessed Will of God: 'Tis no more then, but Gods beholding, or taking a View of his own Purpose, and the Fore-knowledge of the future World must follow by consequence, which Fore-knowledge is nothing else, but the Prospect of what was potentially existent in himself, from everlasting, as hath been said.

From the foregoing Discourse it may appear, that Divine Prescience, as such, cannot in propriety of Speech be said to have created the World, nor to have had any efficacious influence thereupon; and if we consult the Scripture, we shall find the same yet more evident: There we find that God said, † *Let there be light, and there was light.*

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\* Eph. 1. 11. † Gen. 1. 3.

## 54 Of God's Foreknowledge,

That,\* by the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, † and all the host of them by the breath of his Mouth. || That the Worlds were framed by the Word of God. (a) And that He upholds all things by the Word of his Power. Now whether we take the Word of God for his Power, or for his powerful Command, or for the manifestation of his Will, ( as it is frequently used in Scripture under these and sundry other acceptations ) it will still come to the same thing, and what I am pleading for ; but I do not observe it ever taken for Prescience, nor will the Bible ( I think ) afford an Instance of any Causality ascribed thereunto ; but on the contrary, many Scriptures do clearly evince Divine Prescience, and at the same time ascribe the Events foreseen to other Causes, which must needs be very much to the matter in hand , I shall mention two or three.

First, Our Saviour Christ ( as was noted before ) is said to know all things that should come upon him ; and yet his being delivered unto death by the Jews, is attributed to their ignorance ; For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

Secondly, In the 29th. Chap. of St. Luke's Gospel, (a) our Lord Christ foretold ( and there-

\* Plal. 33. 6. † Heb. 11. 3. || Heb. 1. 3. (a) Ver. 43, 44.

therefore certainly he foreknew it ) that Enemies would cast a Trench about Jerusalem, that they would lay it even with the Ground, and not leave one stone upon another. Should Prescience have these dismal Effects, it might be thought to be a very malignant thing; and that which belongs to God as a Divine Perfection, could not be cleared from being the Cause of much Evil. But let us not charge God foolishly, since we are informed of the true cause in the very next Words; namely, *Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

Thirdly, In the Prophecy of Hosea, it is said of Israel, Ephraim and Judah, \* that they shall fall in their Iniquity, and that they shall be as Chaff driven with the Whirlwind out of the floor, and as smok out of the Chimney. Was this Fore-knowledge the cause of that destruction? No; for it is presently added, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self.*

Again, the Prophet Ezekiel is commanded to say unto the Prince of Tyrus, † *Thou Strangers, the terrible of the Nations, shall draw their Sword against the Beauty of thy Wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness, and bring thee down to the pit, &c.* And shall this come upon him because God foresaw it?

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No 2

\* Chap. 5. Chap. 13, † Book. 28.

No; but because *thine heart was lifted up*; and thou hast said, *I am a God.*

Lastly, To name no more, St. Paul exhorting \* to stedfastness in the Faith, foretells the *Coming of the Man of Sin*, which would be after the working of Satan, with all Power and Signs, and Lying Wonders; that there would be a falling away from the truth, and men should believe Lyes, that so they might be damned. Now should any Man to requite St. Paul for his Care of the Church, as to lay the blame of all these sad Consequences upon him, I know not whether would be greater, the Folly or Wickedness of such a Charge; and it would be yet worse, to lay the fault upon the Spirit by which he spake, as coming near to Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. But the Text carries the Cause along with the Effect, namely, *† Because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong Delusions, &c.* When truth has offer'd it self by Miracles, and all possible demonstrations unto the minds of Men, and will not be received, it is a signal piece of Justice, to give them over to believe a Lye. But here first the true Physician of a Christian Soul admonisheth it's safety

\* 2 Thes. 2. 3. † Verse 3, 3.



safety and it's danger ; it's safety, not to be soon shaken ; and it's danger of being deciev-  
ed : Now, if the Soul reject both the *Phy-  
sician* and his *Advice*, and having wilfully  
put it self into the Hands of an *Ignoramus*, is  
destroy'd by him ; nothing in the World can  
be more ridiculous, than to blame the time-  
ly Warning and Foresight of the good *Phy-  
sician*.

*Object.* But as concerning these and other  
Prophetick Scriptures, I meet with this *Sal-  
vo*, namely, *That whatever God foretells, he  
doth by his power inforce the accomplishment  
and fulfilling of the same.* For ( say these  
Persons ) *tho' God knows all things knowable,  
yet such Events as are contingent, or depend  
upon the fluctuating, and undetermin'd Wills of  
Men, are never knowable till they are brought  
to pass ; and therefore God cannot foreknow  
them. But now, what God will have brought  
to pass, and whereof he gives Notice to the  
World by his Prophets, he doth bend and impel  
Mens Minds to do them, and by an irresistible  
influence bring them to effect.*

This Argument indeed strikes home ; the  
only danger is, that it goes too far ; and will  
prove what the Patrons of it seem highly to  
oppose. None can pretend a greater concern  
for the Honour of God, than those that de-

claim against what they call *Horrendum Decretum*; yet this *Hypothesis* of theirs will force them to admit the very same thing, and will make God the Author of Sin with an high hand. For if in reference to all such things as are foretold by Prophecy, there must not be admitted any thing contingent, nor purely voluntary, as falls out in other affairs; but all such Events are brought about by absolute force; what is this but a fatal and inevitable Decree? And how can second Causes fall under any blame, since they are infallibly determin'd by God's Almighty Power? Hence it will follow, that the *Jews* and the *Roman Soldiers*, were no more to be blamed for their Injustice and Cruelty to the Blessed Jesus, than a Watch is for going too fast, when the Spring is set too high, or made too strong for the Movement. And if the fault be not in second Causes, it must of necessity lye upon the first.

It will be in vain to alledge, that they had been grievous Sinners formerly, and therefore God justly gave them up afterwards to hardness of Heart. For, \* *The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the World*, tho' not actually, yet so as to be the Object of Divine Preience, unless you will say, he

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\* Rev. 13. 8.

was slain from the foundation of the World, and yet God knew not of it. It was then foreknown unto God, that the Lamb would be actually slain, before they that slew him had done good or evil. So that if God do enforce whatever he foreknows, then they who crucified our Saviour, were under a necessity of doing it, from the foundation of the World; and they who shall be seduced by Antichrist to believe a Lye, and so be damned, have been about sixteen hundred years under a fatal Decree of Damnation. And even *Adam*, whom all Men grant to have had Free-will, must have been under a necessity of falling; unless we shall suppose, that when God foreordained his dear *Son* for a \* *Sacrifice*, he did not know to what End. But the Lamb slain doth suppose Sin to be attoned, and that implies Sinners: Now there could not be Sinners, but some Body must sin first, and that being the first Man *Adam*, must ( by this Argument ) have sinned, not out of choice, but unavoidable necessity, which is a most horrid and impious absurdity.

Thus we have at hand three pregnant Instances, which do mightily expose the weakness of the Objection: The Sin of *Adam*,

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\* 1 Pet. 1. 20.

*Adam, the Death of Christ, the Destruction of Jerusalem.* The first of these appears to have been certainly foreknown unto God, and yet none denies that *Adam* had power to have stood innocent. The second was so particularly foretold by our Saviour himself, that the very Persons were pointed out, who were the chief Actors in it; yet *Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* The third likewise was largely and punctually prophesied; yet had \* *Jerusalem known in her day, the things which belonged to her peace,* Christ says, † *He would have gathered her Children together, as the Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, but she would not.* So that in these great Events, we may easily discern a reserv'd condition, and an evident possibility of having been otherwise, tho' they were all known unto God from the Foundation of the World. For in case of right Judgment and Information (possible enough to have been attain'd) *Adam* had not sinned, *Christ* had not suffered, *Jerusalem* had not been ruin'd. They were all indeed foreseen in their Causes, and those Causes were sure to produce their proper Effects so far as they were permitted; that

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\* Mat. 23. 36. † Luke 19. 42.

is, God forelaw, that Men left to their Liberties and their Lusts, would make a false Estimate of things, and would be sure to act accordingly; but yet such foresight had no Causality upon such Actions, as hath been said; nor could there be any inforcement from God upon such Events, whereby the Liberty of free Agents was in the least diminished, if the Scriptures be admitted for truth.

But here I would not be misunderstood, as if I thought God to be an unactive beholder of all those Transactions which are foretold by Prophecy: Surely he is too much a Cause of all things, to be a *Nude Spectator* of any one Action; and certain Events I grant to have been as well predetermin'd as prophecy'd, of which I shall give Instance presently. When God purposeth to have any thing brought about, he can easily set Agents at work, and remove Impediments; he can turn Mens Hearts like Rivers of Water, yet never so, as to put any preternatural force upon the Will to do evil.

For the course of Divine Providence, (tho' invisible to us) I conceive to be so laid, and things dependent (by God's disposal) in such a Series and Concatenation, that various Causes and Contingents shall con-

cur to operate upon Mens Faculties, in such sort, as to make them willing to act their Parts, (unknown oft-times unto themselves) in order to effect the Almighty's Purpose. Upon which Account I am apt to believe, that even in reference to those Events that are under a peremptory Decree, most of the Actors that bring them about, are as much free Agents, as is the Husband-man in his choice of a fit season to plow his ground. But however, the things I mainly insist upon are these, that since Men derive that strength from God, by which they Blaspheme his Name, and violate his Laws, God must be the primary Cause of those Actions, but not of the Will wherewith they are done. That he doth not Enforce the Volitions unto Evil, and yet he fore-knows them: And that in divers Instances it doth appear, that those Events and Actions have been foreknown unto God, of which the immediate Instruments have been free and voluntary Agents, as hath already been made evident.

There is yet another part of the *Objection* to be considered, namely, *That future contingents are not knowable.* I confess, they are inscrutable to us, to whom they are contingent, but to God there can be no such thing ;

thing; for he that makes any thing contingent unto God, leaves him obnoxious to Surprize and Disappointment, and consequently under great Difficulty of Governing the World. For the clearing of this point, let us lay down for a ground-work ( what I hope is not denied by any that I am concerned with, namely, ) that God Almighty knows most perfectly all things present; and let us see whether this will not both infer the knowledge of things to come, and take away all contingency with respect unto God. And by the way, let us observe the knowledge of Mankind, which tho' very dim and imperfect, even in things now existent, and before our Eyes, yet extends in some degree to things both past and future. The Historian is acquainted with many revolutions of former Ages, and from a parity of Reason may foresee some that are to come. The Physician, that understands in any competent Measure the Nature of a Medicine, knows from whence it derives it's Original, what are it's constituent Principles, and how it will operate. The Mechanist that understands an Engine, knows how it was made, the parts of which it is composed, and what Feats it will perform. The Philosopher, that enquires into

the Reasons of Things, and the Agency of Bodies, with the various Affections of Matter and Motion, can tell before hand the success of divers Experiments and Undertakings, which are in the dark to other People. And the Astronomer can tell the future Appearances of Heaven, as was noted before. Now if all this, and much more, result from Man's imperfect knowledge of a few things, we must sure conclude something further from God's most perfect knowledge of all things, especially if we add hereunto, the consideration of his Dominion and Sovereignty over all Creatures.

The World is a great *Machine* or Engine, which God made at first, and still upholds its Being and Motion by the Word of his Power : Not so much as an Atome can stir but by Vertue derived from him. Shall we then think that the great Operator knows not the parts of \* his own Work, or can be ignorant of its Motions, or of the Influence that one part hath upon another ? It is possible a Curious Artist may make a piece of Watch work to represent all the visible Motions of the Heavens, and to measure out time to an incredible degree of Exactness: The Maker of such a piece must needs know

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\* Acts 15. 18.



know it's Numbers, how long it will go, how one Motion depends upon another, and one Wheel drives on another; nor can he be ignorant, that if he suffer the springs to run down, and Wind them up no more, the Motions will cease, and his Contrivance will become altogether useless: Or if by any other means, he stop some of the Motions for a time, they cannot stir till he gives them liberty, tho' the rest are going in the mean while. Thus the Divine Architect, that framed the World, knows all it's Parts and Influences, all it's hidden Springs of Motion, all the Causes of every Effect, with their Connexion and Dependence, and the Agency of every particle of matter throughout the Universe. He knows for what duration he design'd it's Motion and Existence, and the time when \* *Heaven and Earth shall pass away*. Nor can he be ignorant, that if he withdraw the Springs of Life, his supporting providence from any Creature, or from the whole World, it must sink into a state of Inactivity or Annihilation. Now as it would be an idle Fancy to think, that in such a Watch, there should start up some new Motion, not design'd, and unexpected by the Maker: So it

\* Mat. 24. 36.

is far more extravagant to talk of any thing contingent in respect of God, in as much as his Work is perfect, and he can command a punctual observance of those Laws and Rules which he himself hath given to the Creation, whilst *\* Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Stormy Wind fulfil his Word.*

The Sum is this: God Almighty knows most perfectly all things present; that is, the hidden springs of Action, and all the latent causes now operating; the Nature and Vertues of all things in being, with the utmost extent of their powers and influence, are all manifest in his sight; but since natural things do not work in an instant, their force and efficacy must extend to future time, if I may not say, till time shall be no more; for one part of Matter will still operate upon another, whilst Sun and Moon endure. Now since God cannot know perfectly the force of any Agent, but (at the same time) he must know also the Effect it will have upon it's Patient, and how far again that Patient will become active upon other things; it will follow, that if God did not know things to come, he must of necessity be ignorant of a thousand things present; for as the knowledge of Causes implies

\* Psalm 148. 8.

plies the knowledge of Effects, so doth the not knowing of Effects unavoidably infer the ignorance of Causes. And as he that draws one Link of an extended Chain, draws the whole, and the Motion of one of the Globuli, moves those that are contiguous, and those again others indefinitely: So it is impossible to know any one thing perfectly without the knowledge of more; and God's most perfect knowledge of all things present, must imply the knowledge of all things future.

It may be said, *That all this is true with respect unto inanimate Creatures, but Man acts from an internal Principle, and being left to the Liberty of his Will, may either act or suspend his Actions; and besides, there are so many things may happen to influence his Will, that 'tis very uncertain whether of the two he will choose, until he have effectually chosen.*

Uncertain doubtless it is to other Men, and oft-times to a Man's self, what he will do in some cases; but unto God it cannot be so, for these two Reasons especially:

First, The Heart indeed is so deceitful, that for a Man to find out the Subtilties of his own,\* is no easie disquisition; and it must be

yet

\* Jer. 17. 9, 10.

yet harder to know another Man's. But  
 \* *God sees not as Man sees*; he not only  
 looks upon the heart, but he looks into it;  
 † *He searches and tries it*; He knows the most  
 intimate Secrets of the Soul, and is a discern-  
 er of the thoughts and intents; all Creatures  
 are manifest in his sight; all naked and open  
 before his Eyes. It is impossible then they  
 should deceive him, or act beyond or con-  
 trary to his Expectation. For since words  
 and actions flow (as streams from a Foun-  
 tain) out of the abundance of the Heart,  
 it would be strange that God should know  
 to exactly what the Fountain contains, and  
 yet be ignorant what Streams must issue  
 thence.

Secondly, Since the Principles from  
 whence all humane Actions do proceed, may  
 be reduced to two, namely, those of Na-  
 ture and Grace, and God must know the  
 Efficacy of them both, in as much as the one  
 proceeds from the work of his Hands, and  
 the other from the operation of his Spirit;  
 it must follow that God cannot be ignorant  
 how far Truth or Errour, Vertue or Vice,  
 Equity or Injustice, Reason or Fallacy, Re-  
 ligion or Interest will prevail upon any  
 Man; either in his Natural Capacity, or un-  
 der

\* 1 Sam. 16. 7. † Heb. 4. 12, 13.

der such a Measure of Grace as he bestows upon him for that purpose. For as he knows the force of natural Agents, and the disposition of every Patient to receive, or to repel their Agency; so can he not be ignorant of the Efficacy of that Vertue, which proceeds more immediately from himself. All which amounts to, thus much in short, that God Almighty is the Fountain Cause and Sovereign Ruler of all things, both in the Kingdom of Nature and that of Grace; and therefore must know the whole Series of Causality from the beginning to the End. And since that which is an effect of one thing, becomes the Cause of another; he must equally know the things to come as those present; unless there be some Effects, which proceed not from any Cause at all.

Let us now consider the Nature of a Contingent, and what it is that should make Men think it cannot be foreknown. A Contingent (besides the stricter Notion as it signifies the effect of a voluntary cause) may be, as I apprehend, more strictly taken, for the encountring, or meeting together of sundry Effects, whose Causes do not appear to have had any Connexion. As when a Spring-tide, a Land-flood, and a Storm from the Sea, happening at once, do make an  
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Inundation. Or when a Traveller in his Journey meets with a shower. Or two Friends setting out from sundry Ports, meet in a far Country, without designing it, or knowing one of another. Now a high wind and a Spring Tide, a Journey and a Shower, have each of them Causes sufficient to produce them, but they are contingent each to other, as also in respect of us, who not knowing that such causes were operating, could not foresee the effects. But the case is not so with God, it is not yet come to that pass, that because Men cannot foresee contingent Events, that therefore we must conclude, that God cannot do it neither. For as Wind and Weather are in his Hands, and obey his Will, so Voluntary good Actions flow originally from the Holy Spirit, and evil Actions are permitted, as the Devils were to enter into the Swine: Nor can wicked Agents go one hair's breadth beyond their appointed limits. And even permission it self doth imply Fore-knowledge; for how can any one be said to have permitted, what he knew not of before it was done? I hope, that to evade this Argument there's none will say, that God gives to wicked men a general Licence to do what they please, whilst he in the mean time

time knows not in particular, what wickedness they will commit, until they have acted it. For besides, that this Character is exactly suited unto Satan in his Kingdom of Darkness, it destroys Divine Providence root and branch; for how can God limit, or over-rule to his own good Ends and Purposes, those Events whereof he hath no particular foresight? or how can he be said in such a case to govern the World at all.

But as concerning the Nature of a Voluntary Action, I have spoken before; I shall only add in this place, that since God knows most perfectly the heart of Man, and what causes are interested in forming of his Judgment; how far the Will follows the Dictate of the Understanding, and of right Reason, or whether it is captivated by Sensual Appetite, and by the lusts that war in his Members: Since God (I say) doth infallibly know the Springs of all Actions, whether from Sense, from Reason, or from Grace, and to what degrees any kind of External or Internal force can bend those Springs; he must of necessity know what Man (purely left to his own Faculties) will do upon any occasion.

I have insisted longer upon this *Objection*, as also upon the *Non-causality of Divine*  
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*Prescience*, than some perhaps will think to have been necessary ; but because the sence of the *Objection* is said to come from Persons of very great Learning and Reason, and I did my self hear it strongly urged, *that Prescience must needs cause the things Foreseen* ; I thought it not amiss to enlarge a little upon both the Points, in order to clear them up to common Understandings ; but whether I have done it to Satisfaction, I must leave to the Readers Judgment. The sum of what I have said in reference to this last mentioned ( which I discoursed of before ) is this, that to affirm Divine Prescience to have a Causality, in such sort, that the Events foreseen could not possibly have fallen out otherwise, is Absurd, and it is false. It is Absurd because it puts the Cart before the Horse, and makes that to be a cause which is purely an effect ; and it is False, because it is contrary to the word of Truth, contained in the Scriptures. I shall now conclude this part of my Essay, with the words of the Schoolman ; \* *Neque hinc etiam fit, ut per hanc Prescientiam, Deus imponat necessitatem aliquam rebus sic cognit- tis, quia hac Scientia, ut sic, non est earum causa.* It doth not follow from hence, that

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\* Suarez.



God by his Fore-knowledge imposeth any necessity upon the things so known, because this knowledge, as such, is not the Cause of them.

But before I come to the last part of my Design, I must make a short Digression, to prevent an *Objection* that may arise from what I said not long ago, namely, *That the Divine Will was the fountain Cause of all things, as being the first Mover*; for no doubt God is the first cause of all Motion, tho' he never determines any, exerted by a free Agent to a wrong Object; and all things being wrought (as the Apostle says) after the Counsel of his Will. From hence it may be urged, *That tho' Divine Prescience have no causality, yet since we grant that the Divine Will is the first cause of all things; nor can we deny, that whatever God wills, he certainly foresees; doth it not follow from hence, that all things must come to pass according to the fixed Purpose and Preordination of God, in such sort, that the Will of Man must needs be over-rul'd and predetermin'd, and consequently the free-agency of rational Creatures wholly evacuated?*

I answer, this will by no means follow, as may appear from the consideration of the following particulars.

1. Though God foresees whatever he will

will have brought to effect, yet we cannot say on the contrary, that he wills every thing he foresees. God, 'tis true, wills even the sinful Actions, which he foresees, but with a will permissive of them, not effective; perfectly knowing (as a Wise Man would shrewdly guess) what Persons, so and so inclined, will do in such and such Circumstances, being only Inabled, not Impelled, to act, and being left to follow their own Inclinations. And so he may certainly foresee many things, which he never wills by a positive and effectively determinative will. He equally foresees all things that come to pass, otherwise he would be deficient in point of Knowledge; but we must not say, he wills them Equally. For that would be to approve of evil, and so he would be deficient in point of Goodness. For instance, he predetermin'd *Israel's* Deliverance from *Egyptian* Bondage, and he likewise foretold it: So that herein his Purpose and Foresight run Parallel. But then he foretold *Pharaoh's* Obstinacy in detaining the People, at the same time when he will'd him to let them go; and herein his Foresight and express Will are quite contrary. He wills, that *Men should fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth*; and not

not only so, but that they should do it out of \* *free choice*, arising from a true Judgment of things; yet he foreknows that some will be *Disobedient*, and *Iniquity shall abound* †. He wills, that his *chosen People* be with him, and see his *Glory* ‡; and he knows it shall be so; he knows that others will *dye in their Sins*, but he hath sworn he *wills it not* (a). Whatever God hath proclaim'd, is an undoubted Object of Divine Prescience; but every Object of Divine Prescience is not therefore preordain'd, nor agreeable to his Will. Good things are equally the Objects of Divine Pleasure and Foresight; but we cannot say the like of Evil. We may say indeed, that God foresees an Evil Action, but we cannot say he would have it done, nor that he hath power to do it; for both these would imply a contradiction, since 'tis purely inconsistent with the Divine Nature to have either Will or Power to do evil.

A *second* Consideration is this, That tho' the Divine Will be truly and unchangeably one and the same, yet is it distinguishable according to a threefold difference of things about which it is conversant. As *first*, when God

\* Josh. 24. 14, 15. † Mat. 24. 12. ‡ Jo. 17. 24.

(a) Mat. 19. 28.

God designs to bring about some special act of his Providence in the World, as that Promise made to *Abraham*, \* *Unto thy Seed will I give this Land*; in this respect his Will is Positive and Irresistable, nor can all the Powers of Earth and Hell, put one Minute stop unto his Purpose or Decree.

But *Secondly*, when God commands any thing to be done by his People, as their Duty, and for their Good, he deals not with them as inanimate Creatures, but as rational Ones; he proposes unto them a Rule or Law, with the Benefit of observing it; as for Example, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long in the Land, &c.* But he doth not inforce the observation of this Law, upon all those to whom it is given; for so there would be no Transgression. He propounds it to their choice, expecting a Voluntary Obedience upon promise of a Reward, which reward cannot be commensurate to an Obedience upon Force, which properly is no Obedience at all. In this sense therefore his Will is Imperative, but not Irresistable; for the *stiff-necked* are said to resist the Holy Ghost. †

And *Thirdly*, when God forbids any thing

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\* Gen. 12. 7. † Acts 7. 51.

thing to be done by us, that would dishonour him, and destroy our selves, and yet we do it; or when he commands us any thing, wherein we disobey him, his Will is therein only permissive. Thus Sin, tho' directly opposite to the Command, is permitted. And so God is said to have *Suffered the peoples manners in the Wilderness about forty years, \* as also in times past, he suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways †*. Not that their Ways were acceptable to him, or agreeable to his Will, (in any other sense than that of permission) much less efficaciously influenced by him; only they were suffered for a time to run their Course. For, having set before them Life and Death, partly in his Written Law, and partly in their own consciences, and having employ'd all suitable Means, Motives, and Reasonable Inducements for their choosing of the one, and refusing of the other; according to his primary Intention of good unto all Men: If nothing less than Invincible Grace will serve the turn, God is not obliged to save all those as it were by Miracle, that will not be otherwise saved; and therefore permitting obstinate Persons to reap the fruits of their own Works, his second-

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† Acts. 13. 16.

† Acts 14. 16.

ry intention takes place, namely, the manifestation of his Power, Righteousness, and just Severity upon impenitent Sinners, whereby also the preciousness of Grace and Mercy is the more conspicuous to those that receive it.

Now, tho' I like not by any means, that distinction of the Divine Will into Secret and Revealed, especially when these two are made to contradict each other; as if it were God's Secret Will that Men should sin and be damned, when his revealed Will bids them repent and be saved; this is to stem the Current of Scripture, and in effect to make void both the Law and Gospel. I say, tho' I approve not this, nor shall I borrow any of the School Distinctions; yet I think the Scripture will allow us to say, that the Divine Will is either Positive, Preceptive, or Permissive. By Positive I mean Irresistible, in reference to what God does himself, or what he positively determines to be done; Preceptive is with respect unto Laws, and Mens voluntary obedience thereunto; Permissive in respect of Sin. And yet this is still the same most blessed and unchangeable Will, as it is the same Sun-beams by which some sort of Bodies are hardened, others melted, and a third calcined.

I come now to the last part of my Undertaking, which is to answer some of those *Objections*, that are wont to puzzle divers People about this matter; but I have answered so many already, that have risen by the way, and have enlarged beyond my expectation in what is past, that I would think, it should spare some pains in the remainder. For the strength of what now remains, may be summ'd up in a very few *Objections*, and answered (I hope) in not many words.

It is matter of easy Observation, that the Objectors do still suppose the thing in Question, and what ought to be proved before the Objections can have any force at all; as namely, that God's foreknowledge of the End makes void the use of Means; whereas it is so far from doing that, that the use of Means and second Causes, is therein supposed and imply'd, as the Foundation of such Foreknowledge. For if it were possible, that the force and efficacy of Causes could be uncertain unto God, the Foresight of Effects would be so too. Thus, for example, if God foresee that such a Child shall live to be a Man of Eminent Learning, doth this Fore-sight give him leave to be idle, and become a Truant every day? Now the

Objectors, according to their manner of arguing, must answer in the affirmative, and leave the Child to be made a Scholar by Miracle. But I answer, No; for such a Foresight must have some Foundation; it doth therefore suppose, that God for his part, by his daily providence, will continue unto him a competent measure of health, strength and capacity, and afford him fit means and opportunities of becoming Learned; and that the Boy for his part, will studiously employ and improve the same for the best advantage to that End. Let us now see the full strength of what is wont to be objected in this matter.

*Obj.* If God's Fore-knowledge doth ascertain the End, to what purpose is the use of means? An Event can be no more than certain; and if God foresees that I shall certainly dye within a year, all the Medicines in the World will not make me live a day longer. But if he foresees, I shall live twenty years, I shall not only need no Physick, but I may for diversion, leap over a day into a River, or into the Ocean, without any fear of drowning. I can neither fall short of, nor go beyond that fatal Period which is fixed in Divine Prescience. *Ans.* This Objection seems to make some little noise, and yet at most is but a plausible



kind of Fallacy, imploy'd only by vulgar and unthinking heads; but unworthy a Man of good consideration. It is indeed answered in what hath been already said; but I shall add something more in these few particulars. As first,

1. This sort of Reasoning resembles so much that of the Devil to our Saviour, that it may very well seem to challenge the same Author. If God forsee thou shalt live many years, thou may'st leap into the Sea, or throw thy self down from a Precipice, (says the Objection) for thou must certainly live out thy appointed time. \* If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down from this Pinnacle of the Temple, (says the Devil) for he shall give his Angels charge concerning thee †. Now, as the ground of that Security against Dangers, and sundry Evils mentioned in the 91st. Psalm, at ver. 8. is omitted in the Devil's Quotation: So the ground of God's Foresight and cause of the Event foreseen, is omitted in the Objection, namely, a prudent care to preserve life. And as the Son of God was never like to fall down and worship the Devil, so any sober Man that lives to a full Age, is not like to attempt desperate ways to destroy

\* Mat. 4. 6. † Psalm 91. 8.

himself. The Answer too, given by our Saviour, is proper in this Case; \* *Then shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*: For if he foresees the End, he foresees also the means conducing thereunto, which means God having graciously put into thine own hands, why shouldst thou tempt him to save thy life by Miracle, when thou may'st preserve it by thy own Discretion? Thus we see, the Devils Argument, and that of the Objection, run exactly Parallel.

Secondly, The Fallacy of this reasoning consists partly in joining a Truth and a Falshy together, and make the one to infer the other, tho' there be no Connexion between them; and partly in leaving out the consideration of that which must be suppos'd, to make the sense compleat, whether the inference be true or false: For instance, let this be the Argument in short:

*God foresees the End, therefore it will so come to pass.*

I say here, the Proposition is true, but the inference (without something else supposed) is false; for if the illative Particle *therefore*, refer only to the word *foresees*, there is no good consequence, since Forelight hath not any Causality, as hath (I hope) been proved.

proved. That Divine Preſcience doth ascertain the End, is true upon this Account, \*that it beholds the Cauſes wherein the certainty doth conſiſt, but that it doth lo meerly of it ſelf, without ſuppoſition of Cauſes, and proper means to effect that end, is falſe. God, by his Foreſight, lays no neceſſity upon the Event; but he foreſees it in it's cauſes, of which humane Endeavours ordinarily are no ſmall part. Therefore the ſence of the Argument muſt, in this manner, be completed, before it can be made to conclude any thing.

*God foreſees the cauſes productive of ſuch Effects, therefore ſuch Effects will follow; not from the foreſight, but from the cauſes foreſeen.*

Thirty, Let us ſuppoſe, that God foreſees ſome ſtrong Man, vigorous and healthy, ſhall dye within a year, who according to the Courſe of Nature might live twenty. If this be true, it muſt be true alſo, that intemperance, neglect of means, or the like, muſt bring him to it: Some cauſe there muſt be; but naked Foreſight is no cauſe at all! Again, ſuppoſe God foreſees, that ſuch a per-

\* Neceſſitas conſequentiæ in ordine probandi, non eſt neceſſitas rei ipſius in ordine cauſandi. *Baxi. Meth. part 3. pag. 45.*

person will live twenty years. If that be true, then, that he should attempt every day to destroy himself, must be false; for if God foresees the one, he foresees not the other, because they are inconsistent. He doth not foresee contradictions to be true, or things to be that will never be; as once a wise Critick would needs maintain, that when *Jonah* was sent to preach unto *Nineveh*, God then foresaw, that City would be destroy'd in forty days, tho' it stood many years after. But God doth not foresee that Causes will produce such Effects as are improper and impossible; not that Repentance will produce Destruction, nor that Poison, Drowning, or Debauchery, will produce length of days, and vertuous prudence an untimely End. In a word, Divine Prescience beholds not things in parcels, but altogether in one View: Sees the Issues and Periods of all things, not without, but in conjunction with the proper causes conducive thereunto.

*Fourthly*, It may not be amiss to remember, that as there are some true Propositions, which by leaving out a word or two may be made false: So there are others (and those of Divine Authority) which without something understood, cannot be made out to be true. Of the first sort is  
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this, \* *My Doctrine is not mine ; and again, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me.* But this is the Devil's way of quoting Scripture, leaving out the Context that should explain it, and in this manner too frequently do some Persons deal with those Writings, they have a mind to cavil at. Of the other sort is this, † *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown ; And || Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God ?* Now the Divine Purpose for the Destruction of that City, and for excluding (a) Fornicators, Idolaters, Thieves, Drunkards, Extortioners, and the like, out of the Kingdom of Heaven, is denounced absolutely without any annexed Condition ; and yet all acknowledge, that such Threatnings are Conditionally to be understood, and to be executed only in case of Impenitency : And thus it is in our present case. That God Foresees the End, is true ; but it is not the whole Truth, nor to be understood exclusive of the Means. It is undoubtedly true, that Christ foresaw the Destruction of *Jerusalem* ; yet we must not thence infer, that he foresaw it without any respect to Sin ; for thus he complains, *How often would I have gathered your*  

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\* Jo. 7. 16. Jo. 12. 44. † Jon. 3. 4. || 1 Cor. 6. 9. (a) v. 10.

*Children together, &c. and ye would not ! How could it be matter of Complaint that they would not, if the Peoples choice be not imply'd ? Either God Foresees, that Men will abuse their Liberty, or he doth not ; if not, then neither is he Omniscient, nor are the Scriptures true ; if he doth, then such Foresight is so far from taking away Mens Liberty, that it confirms it ; for Men cannot abuse their Liberty unless they have it ; nor can they use it, if the Objection have any force, which supposeth Mens endeavours, and the use of Means to be in vain. Thus then I Summ up what hath been said in Answer to the Objection.*

*\* God has made the World made all things therein, seeing he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, and giveth unto all Life, and Breath, and all things ; and hath made of one Blood all Nations of Man to dwell upon the Earth, and Determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation. We ought not to think, that the Godhead is like unto Stones, or stupid Earth, that he should be ignorant either of his own Offspring, or of the Work of his Hands, or the Bounty of his Goodness. And having graciously endued Mankind with the Light of Know-  
ledge,*

ledge, and with a Faculty of choosing things for his good, and avoiding things hurtful; he doth not extinguish that Sight, nor take away such power of Election, unless it be, as a Punishment, for some grievous and long-continued Provocation. But so far as he beholds at once in his Omnipresence, the Nature, Vertue, and Activity of all Creatures, with the Causes, Events and Issues of all Things and Actions, from Everlasting to Everlasting; and since he knows most perfectly the Heart of Man, the Bent of his Affections, his measure of Grace, and prevailing Motives; he must of necessity Foreknow the various Results of Man's choice and Liberty of Will, without the least obstruction to the free Course and Exercise thereof. He Foresees the End, together with the Means, and the Effect depending on its proper Cause. He foresees, that some Men shall not live out \* *half their days*, but they are such as are bloody and deceitful. He foresees, that † *The Years of the Wicked shall be shortened*; but then he shall fall by his own wickedness. And to conclude, he foresees, that ‖ *A righteous Man shall prolong his days*; not by daily attempts to destroy himself, but (as the Wise Man saith)

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saith)

\* Psal. 55. 23. † Prov. 10. 27. ‖ Prov. 11. 5.

faith ) by the fear of the Lord, and in the way of Righteousness.

Obj. One Objection more, and I have done. It hath been often said in this Discourse, that the Event Foreseen of God, is certain, and will come to pass; and again, it hath been asserted, that some Events, which have been Foreseen, might possibly not have come to pass; how can these two Notions agree together?

I answer, first, that any thing can be certain and uncertain at the same time, and in the same respects, is granted to be a contradiction; but a thing barely Possible, which may either be, or not be; implies no contradiction at all. For as there are many things Possible to be, which shall never come to pass Actually; so other things shall Actually come to pass, which yet Possibly might not be. Thus it is Possible, I may go to Rome, but 'tis a thousand to one, I shall never come there; and if it Actually so fall out, yet that does not take away the Possibility of going thither; for Learned Men say, \* *Multa futura esse que non erunt, & multa posse fieri qua non fient.* On the other hand, something will Actually ( that is certainly ) be done this day, which possibly might be deferr'd till to morrow: *Illud enim*



*enim possibile est, quo posito nullum sequitur inconveniens.* But all this perhaps will better appear from the consideration of these Particulars.

1. An Event may be certain with respect unto God, which is not so to us; for nothing can be uncertain to him that is Omniscient; but to us, that know but in part, almost every thing Future is obscur'd with some kind of uncertainty.

2. An Event may be certain in it self, on Supposition of certain Causes; and yet supposing other Causes, it would fall out quite otherwise. So that

3. The certainty of a future Event is absolute in respect of God, Hypothetical in respect of it self, but unknown or uncertain in respect of us. That is to say, it can never so fall out, but that he who knows the whole train of Causes leading to it, must of necessity Foreknow it. But it is the Causes (not the Foreknowledge) which make it to be what it is; which being supposed, the Effect certainly follows. Which Certainty extends not to us, who are ignorant of the Causes. Let us see now, how this will appear by instances.

Suppose, the *French* King, before he dye, turns *Protestant*; whether it so fall out or

not, God knows; for (as Solomon saith) \* *The Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord.* If Conviction or Interest oblige him to become a *Protestant*, the Effect will certainly follow; but this is Hypothetical; that is, upon Supposition of prevailing Causes and Motives it must follow. But to us there can be nothing of Certainty, whilst we are ignorant of that Princes Intentions, neither know how it may please God to work upon him hereafter.

The Captivity of the *Jews* was certainly Foreknown unto God, and, together with a great Pestilence foretold by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, in a very remarkable and particular manner: And afterwards, saith the Lord, *I will deliver Zedekiah King of Judah, and his Servants, and the People, and such as are left in this City, from the Pestilence, from the Sword, and from the Famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, and into the hand of their Enemies, &c.* And he adds further, *That their City shall be given into the hand of the King of Babylon, and he shall burn it with Fire.* Yet the same Prophet is sent to call them to Repentance, to prevent even this very Captivity, and tells them, || *If ye thoroughly amend*  
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\* Prov. 21. 1. + Jer. 22. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. || Jer. 7. 5, 6, 7

your Ways and your Doings ; if ye thoroughly execute Judgment between a Man and his Neighbour ; if ye oppress not the Stranger, the Fatherless and the Widow, and shed not innocent Blood in this place, neither walk after other Gods to your hurt ; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the Land that I gave to your Fathers, for ever and ever. We see here a reserved Condition, and fair possibility of preventing that Eminent Captivity, so much noted in Scripture, and so much Prophefied. God grant that we, by the same Method, may earnestly endeavour to prevent another Captivity, which has (they say ) been Prophefied too, and which severely threatens England at this day.

I conclude with *Adam's Transgression*, before-mentioned ; which was most certainly Foreknown unto God, forasmuch as \* *Redemption by the Precious Blood of Christ was Foreordained before the foundation of the World* ; and 'tis no less certain, that *Adam* had Free Will, and Power to have persisted Innocent, which surely amounts at least to a possibility of not transgressing the Divine Command. And this consideration alone is enough to answer the Objection, and to silence any Argument that can be opposed in this matter.

1 Pet. i. 10.

I have now done ; the Uses I propound to my self from this Discourse are Special-ly these four : 1. To read the Scriptures Impartially, and to value them Equally, upon the Account of that Sacred Authority stamp'd upon the whole, and the Spirit that breaths in every part ; not to build an Hypothesis upon some few single Expressions, further than it may appear, to be consentaneous to the integral Body of Truth contained therein. 2. In all mysterious Points, wherein there appears a difficulty, either to affirm or deny, still to adhere to that side which hath the surer Evidence ; and wherein the Word of God is clear and unquestionable, to esteem that the strongest Evidence of all ; and unto which all Arguments from humane reason, and even Mathematical Demonstration, must yield submission. 3. But in such matters, wherein there appears equal Danger in both extreams, and wherein many Person have err'd on either hand ; to take the *MIDDLE WAY*, and walk in it, with such Caution and Moderation, as to be Friends with them that tread not the very same steps, and always ready to admit any further discovery of Truth. 4. To represent the Ever-blessed God, in the best manner that may be thought, and most worthy of  
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of so glorious a Being, cloathed with all Perfection, Beauty and Amiability; not to render him Monstrous, like armed Power without Benignity; nor Contemprible as an ignorant or defective Deity; but especially to think of him according to the Notices he has given of himself in his revealed Will; and not to imagine, that either his Essence, or many times, his Operations can stoop to my little understanding.

And if I were fit to give Advice to others, it should be this, that no Man presume to demolish the Divine Attributes, and out of the ruins thereof, to erect unto himself some groundless Fancy, which like a Castle in the Air, hath nothing Solid to support it; as if God could not be just to his Creatures without being imperfect in himself. Neither let any Man stand dismayed at the Consideration of the Fatal Period; as if God could not foreknow the Events of things, but either Divine Justice must be Arraign'd, or Man Degraded to a Machine; for as he that doth Righteousness is Righteous, and by perseverance therein shall undoubtedly be happy; so he that wilfully persisteth in evil doing, is Wicked; and without Repentance, must expect to be miserable. But as the former of these will look upon Divine Prescience as

the Cause of his Happiness; so neither can the latter blame it, as any occasion of his Misery.

Let no Man think to arrest Judgment, by absurdly charging his own Prevarications upon Divine Perfection; as if a Man should urge, that because God is perfect in all his Attributes, he was therefore obliged to be wicked in all his Actions: Who would not blush at the Impudence and Absurdity of such a Plea? Prescience is a Perfection which God cannot want and preserve his Divinity; but to make it a Cause of Mans Misery, were to make it an imperfection. It is no less essential to the Divine Nature than Omnipresence; and those that will dare to Retort their wickedness upon God, may make this Attribute as Criminal as the other. For if Men will not trust God with the Foreknowledge of evil Actions, lest that should infer a necessity of sinning, the next thing (and with equal reason) will be to seclude Divine Presence from the inspection of wickedness, lest God should that way become accessory thereunto. If a naked Foreknowledge of Evil, be any cause of it, why not actual Presence at the Evil committed?

But the Scripture doth better inform us, concerning the Causes of good and evil, and  
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of Mans Happiness and Infelicity, than the shallow reasonings of some Persons, who yet pretend to be wise above others. There we are taught, that Man's happiness depends upon the Grace of God in Christ Jesus, freely offered to reasonable Creatures, and willingly accepted by them. That the Soul, not by any blind fatality, but by rational inducements and the use of proper Means, being convinced of the Evil and Danger of Sin, and directed the way to Salvation, is brought to such a Belief of the Gospel, and such a voluntary Obedience thereunto, as may render the Person acceptable with God through the merits of our Blessed Saviour; \* *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his Grace.*

And then the cause of Man's Sin and Misery doth consist, not in Divine Preſcience, but in the Prevalency of Corruption and Temptation, arising partly from an Original Taint, and partly from a wilful Pursuit of irregular Appetite after the pleasures of sense; by which means, the Affections being besotted, and the heart hardened against Reasons without, and Motions within, there is at last an inveterate and habitual Malignity brought

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\* Eph. 1. 7.

upon the Soul. \* But let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed, Jam. 1. 13, 14.

These are such causes of Good and Evil, that a diligent observer may easily see and feel their Efficacy; but how a naked Prescience should operate, what others do, I know not. I can by no means understand. But this I conclude for certain, that God is Righteous in all his ways, both with respect unto the causes of Good and Evil, and their Rewards or Consequents. His Judgments will one day appear to be according to Truth, without the least diminution of his other perfections; namely, † Unto them that are contentious and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath; but to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, Eternal Life, Rom. 2. 7, 8.





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